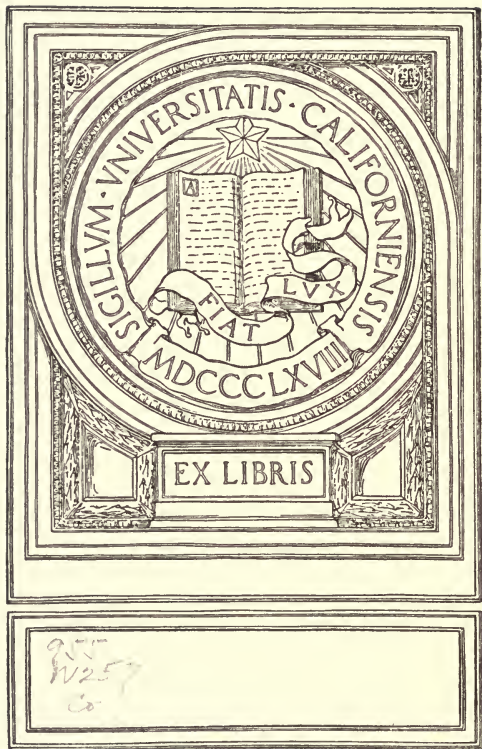


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COME FORTH

BY

ELIZABETH STUART (PHELPS) *Ward*

AND

HERBERT D. WARD



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NOTE.

THIS volume is not a Scriptural paraphrase. Any reverent attempt to make the solemn Personality around which the story centres practically real to the imagination must be difficult, but may be in accord with the highest Christian sensitiveness. Therefore the authors have not thought it necessary to confine themselves to the recorded incidents of Gospel history. Mercy to the miserable and loyalty to friendship are the leading characteristics of the Sacred Biography. The use of them in fictitious narrative we believe to be in full harmony with the most tender reverence for the Saviour of mankind; and it is with this understanding of our spirit and purpose that we ask our readers to interpret this book.

This note would be incomplete without a word gratefully acknowledging the cordial criti-

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cal assistance that we have received from the eminent Palestinian scholar, Professor John A. Paine, of the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

E. S. P. W.

H. D. W.

COME FORTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE morning was fresh, and the wind arose from the western sea. Elsewhere it might have been called an invigorating day. In Judea and in summer one scarcely says that. Prescience of the dusty dryness to come scorches the nerve, and it is with the imagination busy upon the hot noon that the body enjoys the cool of an exceptional dawn.

The hour was yet early, but so are the habits of a hot country. The city was already astir. The open markets at the roadside and in the shadow of the city gates chattered busily, finding a good share of their customers among a people devout enough to get up early in the morning and go to worship.

For with the synagogues, too, dawn was a busy time. A full stomach and a pious conscience pulled well together. People ate and prayed, and so began to live with the easy content of the Oriental.

The day was the second of the week, and the place was Jerusalem, — hot, bright, splendid Jerusalem; the glory and despair of the thoughtful Jew; the pride of the most thoughtless; the hope, the doom, and the enigma of the race.

Let us take the trouble to consider what the city of New York would be if idealized by the rural native through a fiery national patriotism; what Paris, if enshrined by a great religious sanctity; we may almost add, what Heaven, if universally desired by earth.

Thus was Jerusalem to the country people of Judea in the year on which our story opens.

The suburbans, to whom Sabbath-traveling was forbidden by the ecclesiastical law, were fewer in number upon the Sacred Day than upon a week day such as the one of which we speak; it chanced to be a Monday.

These Judean women had already performed their simple morning tasks, — had got the breakfast of lentils and fruit easily out of the way, had shaken the mats and brushed the dust, and bathed and wrapped themselves shyly into their veils, — and were now meekly following in the shadows of their men, who did not, by courtesy, address them in the streets.

“Yonder goes my lord,” said a woman with a deep voice and roving eyes. She spoke to a neighbor, one of a group of several suburbans

who were making their way to the service of morning prayer about to be held in one of the minor synagogues.

"My brother should not be far distant," replied she who had been addressed.

"He is there," observed another voice; a gentler voice than either of the first. "He standeth apart by himself, Martha. That is our brother with his eyes bent upon the ground in thought."

"Surely," nodded Martha briefly, "your eyes are swifter than mine; they always were."

A fine observer regarding the two women might have said, or would have thought, "It is the heart that is swifter." But the ruder woman was not such an observer. And naturally, one's neighbor's affairs were less interesting than one's own.

"I hope Ariella will manage to get through the day. Our neighbor, the mother of Baruch, promised to look in upon her; and Baruch himself is worth two men with eyes for such a purpose. I would have had my husband to stay at home; but he said he was not the woman of us to be nursing sick-folk. See! there he goes. There goes Malachi. A comely man, and no more fond of his own way than a man ought to be."

Malachi, a swaggering Pharisee, with the broadest phylactery on the street, bound across

a dark coarse forehead, strode by the women at this moment; he passed without recognition.

"I would have remained with Ariella," said she of the quiet voice, "but blind Baruch is tenderer than the most of women. She will not suffer, Hagaar."

"For my part," retorted Hagaar, a little snappishly, "I think I have a right to see the world now and then like other people, if I *have* a sick daughter."

"Hush," pleaded the other, "oh, hush! we are about to pray."

Hagaar rolled her round eyes more in wonder than in displeasure upon her gentle neighbor, and became silent.

With the bowed head, covered face, and deferent step of the Eastern woman, the little group now passed up the steps of the synagogue, and crossed its portico to the entrance set apart for their sex.

The men, less reverent, as of course, more individual of manner, jabbered steadily up to the last moment. They did not speak Hebrew, which was now the lost language of the race, the tongue of culture and scholarship. They talked in Aramaic, the language of the people, of the unlearned, of the democracy; for these were not the worshipers of the Temple, made glorious by national tradition and reverence,

cherished by conservative religion and patronized by social influence. These were the classes of people who frequented the synagogues, where heresy was taught not without authority ; these were the powerful sect of the Pharisees, a party with many excellent points, not always credited in the memory of their weaker and worse ones. These were the vigorous bourgeois who had tried to revolutionize the Jewish Church, and who to some extent succeeded.

A theocracy is a great simplifier of masculine consecration, in that religion and patriotism are identical, but not of masculine discussion, in that no theocracy has yet extinguished politics ; and the Jewish one at this time was a political madhouse, in which each maniac ran his own fixed idea till he came in contact with some keeper stronger than himself, and so got into his strait-jacket as a matter of course.

Malachi the Pharisee, having talked several of his acquaintances out of hearing, made a dead set upon the young man, the brother of Martha and her quiet sister, — the young man who stood apart and mused with his eyes upon the ground ; they were fine eyes, we may pause to say. He was, take him altogether, a fine-looking fellow.

Yet when we have used the words, they seem to form a phrase not so much too modern, for

the great lines of human type run without regard to chronology, but too urban, too conventional, to describe him. He had unquestionably great beauty ; but this handsome youth was no man of the world.

On the other hand, assuredly he was no rustic. He had experience, position, authority, in his air. He had wealth and taste in his costume. He had the ease of the affluent middle classes. He was finely formed, with a figure inclining to spareness but made vigorous by physical labor, and refined by the fact that the severest of this labor was apparently behind him. He gave the impression of a devotee called by fate to some practical mechanical occupation ; a man born for a vocation, but born into an avocation.

His eyes were large, gray, and a little sad, liquid, dreamy, and winning ; his lips had the ascetic delicacy of intellectual or spiritual temperaments. He had almost feminine beauty of coloring in skin and hair. He was attractive, both as painting and sculpture are attractive.

Malachi, strutting a little, as men of his sort do, whether there is anything to strut about or not, laid his large hand heavily upon the young man's shoulder, and accosted him with the familiar jocoseness which is seldom more pleasing to men of such natures than it is to women ; or, at least, to women of good breeding. What he

said was not important from any point of view, and received the brief reply of polite indifference, until he let fall a word which dropped upon the young man's calm like a spark upon dry chaff.

It was a single word which Malachi spoke, — a name ; but his neighbor fired at it into instant animation.

“ I understand,” observed the elder man, importantly, “ I am told, on good authority, that he will address the congregation to-day.”

“ From whom did you learn this ? ” asked the other ; he had an expression which might indicate either real surprise or feigned ignorance. It was not easy to say which.

“ I have it in confidence from no less than the Chazzan,” nodded the Pharisee. “ I am often consulted upon matters of the synagogue. It appears that my opinion has value. I was asked if I could recommend the young Rabbi.”

“ And what answer gave you ? ” inquired his neighbor, with a reticent smile.

“ Oh, I did my best for him ; I did my best. I said I thought him a worthy young man, deserving of a hearing, at all events for the present. I am not sure of his doctrine, myself ; it is free, — free. He does not hold himself in fealty to the Law, it is said ; nor yet, I fear, to the Oral Tradition. He may prove a danger-

ous fellow. But I am a liberal man. I said : Give him fair play. Give him a hearing."

"Doubtless he of whom you speak feeleth under obligation to you," returned the other, gravely.

"Of course," said Malachi, "naturally. I should suppose he would."

He glanced at his companion's fine averted face : he could make nothing of it ; he had the vague discomfort of dull self-sufficiency which feels itself criticised, but cannot perceive how or why.

Synagogue-service, at that time in the history of the singular people with whom our story deals, might be called the main amusement as it was the chief religious exercise of the populace. What games were to the Romans, worship was to the Jews, — the popular entertainment, the thing to do, the opportunity of seeing one's neighbors. Ancient life did not differ so much from modern in this respect. The congregation went to the service from mixed motives, as we go to a prayer-meeting in country parishes.

Now the Jews, being always a thrifty people, set a high value upon industry. A man usually taught his son the father's trade ; and each trade was held in honor of its own to such extent that synagogues were erected for the particular accommodation of classes of mechanics.

The stonecutters, the coppersmiths, the tent-makers, had their places of worship. The building of which we speak was known as the Synagogue of the Carpenters.

It was a plain building, constructed of stone, with a Greek portico held by scanty pillars. A certain resemblance to the great orthodox Temple might be detected in the modest dissenting house of worship. Whatever his theology, every Jew adored the Temple, after all.

The women were already seated when the men of our little party entered the synagogue. The sexes were separated strictly. A wall or railing ran between them. One could just comfortably look over its edge.

The exclusion of women from the synagogue, or the crowding of them behind screens and in galleries, is a custom of late invention.

The synagogue was cool and calm. The women sat like hooded flowers, mute and sweet in their meek places. They turned their faces humbly toward the upper end of the building, where the Law lay in a sacred chest in imitation of the Ark of the Temple.

In the middle of the audience room, on a raised platform, the speaker of the day — he whom they called the Sheliach — was already vigorously reciting the Shema. He was an old man with a waving white beard; one of the

.

most familiar and least interesting of the preachers in the Synagogue of the Carpenters.

The young Rabbi was not to be seen.

“He will come,” whispered Malachi the Pharisee; “I have been informed that he is expected. But it ill becomes him to be tardy.”

Now it was one of the excellent customs in Jewish church-law that ten men were professionally employed to start an audience. Without a quorum of this number the Law could not be read. With this quorum, services might begin at the appointed hour; and so neither were the too early and too few disappointed, nor the too late suffered to drag the occasion.

The young man whom Malachi was instructing upon the ecclesiastical prospect of the day made no reply, but silently passed forward toward his seat. This was directly in front of that of his two sisters. The elder sister turned her head at the sound of his step; but the younger sat modestly with downcast eyes. Suddenly she whom they called Martha whispered:

“He turns back. He hath been summoned from without.”

The sweet face of the other changed its expression slightly; but she was not the kind of woman who talks in the synagogue, even with a chattering sister. Her countenance was so mobile, indeed, that she needed few words. Far

above the manner of most Oriental women, whose lack of education and severe domestic seclusion gave them monotony of expression, her face had language. But it was a high language, full of dignity and delicacy, rather than an agile one, feminine, coquettish, or gay.

“And where,” persisted Martha, “where in the world is *He*?”

Her sister answered only by a finger tip on the lips; but her eyes betrayed a fine, feverish excitement, powerfully suppressed. She bent her head meekly, and gave devout attention to the old Sheliach. Was that not her duty? A young mechanic from the men’s division of the synagogue looked back at her in rapt neglect of the Reader. Was not that his nature? She did not return his gaze, for the excellent reason that she knew nothing about it.

Her brother, meanwhile, having answered the summons which called him from the synagogue, passed out over the portico, and looked abroad for the messenger. One stood there, whom he recognized by a mute sign; he moved apart with him for a few moments, and the two conversed in low tones. The messenger was a plain man, in the working-clothes of a fisherman. Something in his bearing seemed to place him above his class; but it would not be easy to say what this was. His grammar was that of the unedu-

cated people, but his voice had a refined quality, not to be unnoticed by a refined ear.

The two young men spoke earnestly ; they had the aspect of those who might have been friends if circumstances had thrown them together ; their natures seemed to flow toward each other, even upon the simplest topic. Evidently it was no simple topic which absorbed them. After a little conversation, they kissed each other in the Oriental manner, and parted. The messenger went down the hill, and disappeared among the people hastily. The other returned to the meeting.

The Sheliach was still expounding. The congregation looked sleepy. Martha suppressed a yawn, and fidgeted in her seat. Malachi the Pharisee glared with annoyance about the audience. The young mechanic glanced at the younger sister now and then throughout the service. But she sat still in her place.

As her brother passed her in returning to his seat, he contrived to drop the scroll he carried, which contained a record of certain portions of the Oral Tradition. In stooping to pick up the parchment he defied ecclesiastical laws and social conventionality ; for he whispered to his sister in the synagogue. But, as it was his sister, the offense passed unrebuked, perhaps unnoticed. His words were few enough. These were all : —

“The Roman threatens. Look for him no longer, Mary. He cometh not to-day.”

“How know you?” breathed Mary.

“By the mouth of John the Disciple.”

The Sheliach droned on. Mary’s tender countenance fell. The servicé proceeded. In the course of due time it was officially announced by one of the assistant readers that the popular young Rabbi, expected to address the audience on that occasion, was unfortunately prevented from appearing among them; and that our revered friend and father, the Sheliach, would continue the discourse. This announcement was given upon the authority of our well-known and honored fellow-worshiper, Lazarus the Builder, resident at Bethany.

CHAPTER II.

“THE house is mine,” said Martha. “I will have the rug there.” Now she spoke the truth. The house was Martha’s. But then, why say so? This was the nature of Martha’s mind. To make one’s family uncomfortable by insisting on the unnecessary, or asserting the too evident, is a temperamental defect common to so many a house-mistress, besides this excellent Jewish matron, that it is liable to receive more sympathy than blame.

Her younger sister made no reply. The silence of Mary was at once her sweetest charm and finest weapon. It enhanced her and protected her. She had the supreme quality of self-control, which, when born of a high nature, is a divine force.

She turned her gentle eyes away, so that her profile only was visible to her sister, and proceeded to sweep the portico dutifully. Her delicate arms, bare to the shoulder, escaped from her light home-robe in long, free motions timed to the stroke of her broom. Her slender figure swayed dreamily. Her eyes, soft and musing,

had an absent expression. Mary's thoughts were not on the broom. Yet the portico was quite clean.

The young wood-carver, who watched her in the synagogue, should have seen her at that moment to complete his bondage. In fact, he just missed doing so ; being at work on the other side of the house, at the new addition built by Lazarus. Mary had seen this young man before ; she supposed Jacob to be a pleasant boy, and supposed no more about him. Her thoughts did not incline like the thoughts of other women. Earthly love she did not consider. It seemed foreign and unreal to her, like Martha's views about housekeeping. For the most part the Jewish youth were afraid of Mary, and revered her accordingly. She was one of the women who live followed by an unknown corps of lovers, distant, adoring, and silent.

But Martha was a widow.

She had known her troubles, too, though they had not refined her tact or sensibility. She had married too young, to begin with, being a gay girl, and fond of all such liberties as a reputable Jewish maiden might indulge in ; they were not many, it is true, but Martha made the most of them. She had made what would be called nowadays "a good match ;" Simon, her husband, being a rich man. Her marriage was

not many years old, and comfortable enough as marriages go, when she met with her affliction, — the most terrible that can befall an Eastern family. Simon, to make few words of it, became a leper.

His life, fortunately for everybody concerned, was not a long one. In the leper-settlements without the gates of Jerusalem, to which the Law and his wife promptly removed him, the man of wealth and position and family withered out of existence. Martha bewailed him dutifully, and took her place as the mistress of his handsome house zealously. She had never, if the truth were told, enjoyed life so much before. The independence of a “widow well left” is often the first that a woman knows, and sweetens bereavement with the flavor of novelty.

Now, since a man was the head of a family by law and nature, unto Martha had come her brother Lazarus, bringing their sister Mary, and the three abode together with no more than the usual amount of family sparring, — we have some reason to think with less, since the hospitality of their house came to be valued by the peace-loving and quiet-seeking; perhaps it should be added, however, by the peace and quiet bringing.

Lazarus was a man well blessed with this world's goods, and, if a house were the sole

point of view from which to regard life, qualified to dwell in a larger than Simon's. But Lazarus was not a married man, and willing to forego a trivial importance for the more solid domestic comfort. For the truth must be told. Mary he revered, — nay, Mary he did love devotedly. But Mary was not born for a housekeeper. Martha's tongue, on the whole, was offset by her cooking. The three combined their several home qualifications into one successful household contentedly. The house continued to be known in Jerusalem and its suburbs as that of Simon the Leper. Lazarus satisfied his bachelor taste by extensive and expensive addition to what was already the finest house in Bethany, modernized his own elegant apartments, and preserved therein the sweet liberty of solitude.

This was convenient on all sides, for, as Martha said, "Who wanted too much of a man?"

But Lazarus and Mary his sister used to talk together, in quiet places and at quiet times, on the cool side of the portico that he had added, or in his own court after sunset, or on the Sabbath, when they were weary and had performed all that the Law required at the synagogue of the village.

These three people lived an ideal suburban life — and in most respects the suburban *is* the ideal life — to practical ends. Wealth, influ-

ence, character, and the peace of an easy home were theirs. To these agreeable details Lazarus added the vigorous pleasure of a successful and remunerative trade. He was what we should call a master-builder. The meanest of honest trades was respected among his people; and success like his received a general deference. Lack of this was found only among men of superior rank or of high-caste conservative theological views. For Lazarus was a conscientious, influential Pharisee, — the progressive, the protestant, the come-outer of his faith and his times. His position was that of a rich, middle-class reformer.

Martha had raised no objections to the addition to her house. Lazarus being in the business, it struck her as the proper thing.

“It will not cost so much,” she said. “And I need more space for the women myself.”

On this day we speak of, when Martha was troubled about the rugs, Lazarus came home at sunset, thoughtful and reserved. Martha began at once: —

“What aileth thee, Lazarus? Thou wearest a sour face.”

“Oh, not a *sour* face!” cried Mary. “Our brother is weary. See you not, Martha? He hath borne too heavily the heat and burden of the day. We women, who sit apart in the cool

of the house, should remember how the man toileth in the sun."

This was a long speech for Mary; and Martha, a little surprised thereat, received it with equally unusual silence; she left the room and the discussion to prepare the evening meal. Mary and Lazarus sat together. She asked him no questions, but he spoke at once, as if she had done so.

"Has word come from our guest, Mary?"

"No word, my brother."

"I thought we had seen him by this. The people press hard upon him, and overwear him. They kill him with their troubles — sick, lame, blind, leper, and worse than all. They load him down with them as I load the slave that carries my stone. It is said that for nigh a week he has not been known to rest like other men: he goeth to the mountain-top and prayeth there."

"All the night?" asked Mary, pitifully. Her sensitive face had flushed at the first mention of him of whom Lazarus spoke.

"They say, who have seen him closely, that he carries the face of a sleepless man."

"John the fisherman made mention to me of this," added Lazarus. "I met him at the fish-market to-night. He spoke many words to me upon the matter. He said, 'There is a man starving for sleep.'"

“He resteth in our upper chamber,” replied Mary, in a tone of something like entreaty. “He resteth peacefully. Know you not, Lazarus, how his eyes look when he cometh to us in the morning?”

“I have been expecting him,” said Lazarus. His masculine fewness of words expressed no less eager sympathy than his sister’s more ardent manner.

“And I,” she said beneath her breath, “every day — every night. He cometh not.”

“Think you, Lazarus,” she asked timidly, after a pause, during which she had crept upon a low ottoman near her brother’s feet, — “think you that he wearieth of us?”

“I have seen many desert him,” answered Lazarus, in a ringing voice; “I never knew him forsake a human creature!”

Mary nodded silently. A beautiful luminousness stole into her large eyes. She lifted them to the mountain-top towering above her; her whole face and figure seemed to be at prayer.

At this moment Martha entered bustling.

“Come, come! Supper is served, and ye two sit there like mummies while I play slave for ye. Come, Mary! Hasten and serve. Come, Lazarus! What bothers thee *now*?”

“Important business concerns,” said Lazarus, with dignity. Martha offered no retort. She

had a great respect for business. It meant money and position ; it meant things she understood.

“ I am considering,” said Lazarus, as he sat at supper, “ a contract which has been offered me to-day. It is one of importance.”

“ A new customer ? ” queried Martha, with animation. But Mary showed no interest in the new customer. She had relapsed into a sweet dream. She served her brother, while he sat at meat, like an angel walking on a floating cloud that would bear one away at a breath — who knew whither ?

“ Yes,” observed Lazarus, “ I am asked to remodel portions of the palace ” —

“ Palace ! ” cried Martha.

“ Of Annas.”

“ Annas the High priest ? Has *he* given you an order ? ”

“ I speak of none other,” said Lazarus calmly. “ I do the work of an honest man. Is that not good enough for priest or beggar ? And have I not wrought upon the sacred Temple ? ”

“ Take it, by all means,” said Martha, with her shrewd look. “ When shall you begin ? ”

“ Immediately, if at all,” replied Lazarus ; “ and I am inclined to follow your advice, sister Martha. Your judgment passes the judgment of women upon affairs of house and trade.”

These few words flattered and pleased Martha immensely. She became good-natured at once. They were easy words to speak, too, and quite true. Lazarus never said what was not true, even for the sake of domestic peace. Women of Martha's type may be as conscious of their unpopularity as they are of their necessity to society. Appreciation has the highest mathematical value to those who do not get much of it. The tough-fibred, practical woman is never as much beyond the need of it as she seems to be. Martha had a chronic conviction that people "took" to her younger sister at her expense. Lazarus knew this quite well. To save his life, he could not help loving Mary better. But his just soul sought the more severely to recognize Martha's good points.

The three went up to the roof of the house after supper, and sat together in unwonted harmony. It was one of Judea's most agreeable evenings; the cool came on gratefully; the scorching colors of the air died away without a struggle. The little hamlet of Bethany leaned on the eastern slope of Olivet like a child asleep on a sheltering arm. Below, the valley darkened delicately: the outlines of rock and road lingered a long time in the twilight. Figures passing were only dim enough to be poetic and picturesque; one watched them with quiet,

æsthetic pleasure. Above, the mountain-range lifted its solemn head : she rose, purple and calm, like a queen, who had purposes and secrets of her own. Overhead, the clear, far, fine ether of the Oriental sky throbbed, — pale fire melting into a dome of gray.

Suddenly the still air thrilled to a wide, strong tone. It was the cry of the trumpet from the synagogue, calling all the children of Jehovah to the evening prayer.

The master of the household rose at the summons, the women followed him, the slaves in the court stopped, arrested in their labors ; the Jewish family paused with bowed heads and clasped hands ; they prayed silently ; they stood with their faces toward Jerusalem.

When the prayer was finished, Martha went below to give orders to her women, and Lazarus seated himself quietly ; but Mary moved to the edge of the roof, and looked off into the valley. She sat down behind the tiled railing that ran around the roof, that she might not be observed of passers ; her face expressed sudden and eager animation.

“ What seest thou, Mary ? ” asked her brother kindly.

“ Come hither, Lazarus,” replied Mary softly. “ Look for thyself.” She pointed downward toward the valley, where the shadow was length-

ening faster than it was deepening. A group of people traveling from the direction of Jerusalem, winding about the mountain-side, had come to a halt. Their figures could still be clearly seen from the roof of the house.

Mary lifted her beautiful arms, and pointed with one finger at the road ; the delicate outline of the finger trembled.

“It is he,” she said.

“Nay, I see him not,” protested Lazarus.

“It is he,” repeated Mary, undisturbed.

The two peered over the railing, the woman sheltered by her brother’s presence, and gazed into the valley intently.

The group upon the highway had paused at the summons of the evening prayer, it seemed ; or was there perhaps another interruption ?

Tall and motionless among the clustering people, one figure rose preëminent to the eye. It was the figure of a man, young in years, and yet clothed with great dignity. The light was too faint to discern this form with distinctness, except that it stood a little apart from the urgent pressure of the people who had the aspect of entreating him eagerly. In the faint light the man could be seen, as he seemed to turn his face toward the height, and perhaps in the direction of the house of Simon the Leper. Apparently, he hesitated with himself.

“Yes,” said Lazarus, “it is he. It is he indeed. Go and tell Martha to prepare for him. He cometh to us at last.”

But Mary knelt with her face pressed to the tiled railing, gazing persistently down. She did not move to obey her brother’s command.

“Mary!” cried Lazarus, rising in displeasure, “are you dreaming again, now, when he is all but at our gates, — when every moment is precious that we may serve him with our best? *Mary!*”

“Oh,” mourned Mary, “he cometh not. He cometh not. See you, Lazarus. They have deterred him. They call him back. He turneth — see! — he goeth. Oh, he goeth from us. So near us — and so worn for rest — he goeth away without it. He setteth his face already once more toward Jerusalem!”

“You are right,” announced Lazarus, decidedly, — “as usual,” he murmured in a lower tone. “You have the eyes which see, Mary. But I cannot understand this matter! I am distressed at it. Why this hesitation? — Yes. He returneth. Fain would I hasten down and overtake him, and compel him by my heart’s force to tarry with us.”

“Nay,” cried Mary hastily, “nay, nay, my brother. Entreat him not. He knoweth his own will — and the will,” she said solemnly,

“of Him that sent him. Besides,” she added, with quick feminine sensitiveness, “he knoweth that he hath eternal welcome beneath thy roof and Martha’s. We would not *ask* him if he cometh not. See! Look yonder! He turneth the corner of the road as it windeth round the mountain. The people shout and run and press upon him. They bring one unto him — it is an afflicted creature. For that cause he returneth.”

“Verily it is so,” said Lazarus, sadly. “It is one possessed, or other diseased person, whom they bring. Whatever it is which has hindered him from us, my sister, thou mayst know it is the call of woe, or want, or sin. Yes, he joineth the returning people; he returneth — he is gone.”

Mary bowed her face upon the tiles and said nothing. The light of her life and the hope of her soul — the hope of her people, their Master and their Mystery — had withdrawn himself from her sight; and her gentle heart was sore within her.

“Why, he will come back again when that wretch is taken care of!” cried Martha, whose practical view of things was as great a relief at some times as it was a terror at others, to her family. “Of course he will come back! I will myself prepare the upper chamber. Watch for

him, Lazarus, and let me know the first moment that there are signs of him!"

Martha rustled away more noisily than she had come upon the roof.

"A pretty time of day!" she added testily, "to bring one's fits before such as he! — or one's wits either. Fitty people are always half-witted, in my opinion. I'll venture the creature is n't worth curing."

But Mary watched silently, with her burning cheeks upon the smooth warm tiles. Lazarus kept her company awhile. His own fine face wore a look of keen disappointment. Neither spoke; it darkened rapidly; the sound of passing footsteps grew few and faint.

"He will not come," announced the master of the house, at last, with masculine decisiveness. "I go below. Do thou the same, Mary."

Mary did not reply. She was glad when even Lazarus was gone: she sat on alone, half crouched, half kneeling, upon the roof. The dew fell; her bright hair grew damp. Mary had abundant, beautiful hair; it weighed upon her head like a crown. Her soft flesh grew cooled and chill. Her ears quivered, as fine nerves of hearing do, from listening in vain, till the auditory sense becomes an anguish. The step for which she waited did not come.

CHAPTER III.

THE day on which our story opened was a peaceful one in the house of Malachi the Pharisee. Of all days, alas, one could not say that in the house of Malachi. He was an imperious fellow; Hagaar, his wife, was a loud shrew; their only child was an invalid girl. Given these materials, the nature of that house need not be described.

After her father and mother had left her for the trip to Jerusalem, the sick girl sank upon her pillows with a sigh of relief. Solitude was a luxury in her lot, such as only the habitually irritated sick can know how to value. A single maid-servant in a distant part of the house theoretically attended upon her young mistress, and practically forgot her. The girl took this as a matter of course, and reduced her wants to her circumstances, with the patient grace of the frequently neglected invalid. It was easier to thirst for water out of reach, or pant for the motion of the great fan that hung idly in the sultry room over the head of her couch, than to stop her ears from her mother's shrill voice, or

shrink from her father's severity. Malachi had never forgiven his only child for being a girl. A sick one at that, — was he not an unfortunate man?

Ariella thought him so; and meekly reproached herself for her calamity. Ariella was the sweetest girl in the world. Before her misfortune, many a young Jew thought so, — Lazarus, her neighbor, among them. But affliction had shut her quite away from other young people for now so many years that she was well forgotten. It is not impossible that between herself and Lazarus there might once have existed one of those vague, immature attractions which youth and maiden scarcely recognize enough to call them passions, yet which lend a certain tender reverence to their impressions of each other in womanhood and manhood. Lazarus felt sorry for Ariella. Ariella thought kindly of Lazarus. She considered him a handsome man. Sometimes she saw him passing the house on his way to Jerusalem. Once in a while he remembered to salute her as he passed. Otherwise they never met. She had been a beautiful girl, merry, mocking and bewitching. She had faded out of the sensibility of Lazarus, as the color fades from a poor piece of Tyrian stuff when left forgotten in the sun and dew. Might she have been the ruling power of his heart?

She had become only one of its humane regrets. Yet nearer than Ariella no woman had ever come to the life of this pure and meditative Jew.

Ariella experienced the peculiar fate of the sick : to taste of death before one's time, yet to possess the passions of life ; to lie like the wounded soldier —

“ Unable or to move, or die ; ”

to become a ghost in the hearts of one's friends ; to receive from them the regretful tribute that we give to the buried, yet to throb with the hopes, longings, ambitions, all the eager unsatisfied powers of possible activity, — this is the invalid's lot.

Ariella tried to bear it patiently. But she was very young. It went hard sometimes.

Her misfortune befell her on this wise : Upon an early summer evening, when Ariella was sixteen years of age, she was sent by her mother to the fountain of En-shemesh, a mile down the road to Jericho, for water, the cistern in the court being dry, the drought severe. Veiled and protected by the reserve of a modest Jewish maiden, Ariella obeyed fearlessly. It was not thought to be a dangerous errand so near the vicinity of the city ; for Jerusalem was less than two miles from Bethany. But Bethany lay upon the highroad to Jericho, and beyond the suburban shadow was a wild road infested with robbers and barbarians.

One of these lawless fellows, venturing too near civilization, overtook the beautiful girl on her return. "To my tribe I'll take thee!" he said brutally. Ariella flung the jar from her head and fled. Probably the marauder meant less than he said, but murder would not have terrified the maiden more. Arms of man had never touched her, and she flew for dearer than life. The ruffian caught her, and a terrible struggle followed. Her cries brought Malachi, her father, who had been sent by his wife to conduct her home, puffing to the spot. The fellow was arrested and fined four hundred *zug* for uncovering the face of a woman in public. But the girl was hurt. In her struggle she had received a severe spinal injury.

That was nine years ago. Ariella was now twenty-five, and the despair of the best medical skill of Jerusalem. She had become that most pitiful of human beings, — a young invalid "given up."

Ariella was lying quite peacefully on her low couch, upon the morning when she was left alone. Neighbors would come in presently; she liked these neighbors, — Rachel, the mother of Baruch, and Baruch himself, the blind man. They knew what it was to be unfortunate, to be not like other people. *They* could understand.

Ariella wore a white, thin robe, inwrought

with silk embroidery at the edges in a little design of field lilies. She lay within it, white and sweet, a lily herself, living through a long drought. Her face was exquisitely modeled. It had the delicacy of line which comes from prolonged and profound suffering patiently borne.

But when their neighbor Rachel came to her, she brought a disappointment. She could not remain. A servant was sick in the house of Rachel, and required her presence.

“And as for leaving thee alone,” said Rachel, with motherly decision, “it is not to be thought of. I shall send Baruch without me. He shall come to thee; and that girl Deborah must remain within hearing. I’ll see to her! Leave it to me. Baruch’s misfortune and thine own protect thee. For my part, I say it is becoming enough, considering Deborah; and I’ll answer for the propriety of it to thy parents and to all Judea too, if need be. Thou art not like others, Ariella. No evil tongue can harm *thee*.”

Then it befell — for Ariella raised no objections, seeing none — that Ariella and Baruch passed some hours of that morning in a seclusion and freedom unusual to Jewish young people.

They accepted the situation as sedately as two spirits; and the mother of Baruch blessed them and left them contentedly, promising to look in upon them when she could, and roundly

rating Deborah up to her duty as the feminine *dea ex machina* of the position. Baruch and Deborah and Rachel between them moved the cot of Ariella into the court. Baruch seated himself beside it, leaning against one of the stone pillars. The hot morning grew ; the court was peaceful ; the house was still. Deborah sang at her work, chanting from the Psalms ; Ariella and Baruch chatted quietly. How pleasant it was !

But Baruch was born blind.

"Thy fate is worse than mine," said Ariella, pitifully.

"But I can walk," said Baruch bravely.

"Thou art a man and strong," urged Ariella with pretty feminine instinct. This pleased the blind man, and he flushed gratefully.

"Yes," he nodded. "Yes, I am quite strong. I lift many a burden for my mother."

"She says thou art a good son," cooed Ariella.

"I could lift thy cot and thee, and carry thee about the court, and set thee down like a sparrow's feather," protested Baruch.

"Nay, then, do it !" laughed the sick girl merrily. In her heart she thought she should enjoy it. What fun to frolic — like other girls !

But Baruch shook his head.

"I might hit thee against one of the pillars, or jar thee because I could not see. We are not like others, Ariella ; we may not play."

Secretly, Ariella liked this tone of authority ; she yielded to it agreeably, as the feather of the wheat yields to the rising wind. Baruch was a manly fellow. She looked at his strong and patient face ; she could watch him quite freely.

“Thou hast the advantage of me,” said Baruch, after a silence. Ariella blushed. How should he know that she observed him ? She felt sorry, as if she had committed some rudeness.

“Thinkest thou I take an advantage ?” asked Ariella penitently. “I will not err any more.”

“Have it or take it,” replied the blind man heartily. “Use it in either way. I grudge nothing to thine advantage, saving that it is one I may not exercise against thyself, sweet neighbor. I should use it if I could, I pray thee to believe me.”

“I am not much to look at,” parried Ariella, with a little pardonable touch of feminine coquetry. “I am very thin, and my face is long and white.”

“My mother tells me thou art fair to look upon,” replied Baruch simply. Again Ariella felt somehow rebuked. She had often in the presence of Baruch the consciousness of a more massive character than her own. Was this the influence of his supreme affliction ? Her own seemed small beside it.

Sometimes she was so sorry for Baruch that she could have wept for him.

Sometimes Baruch was so sorry for Ariella that he could have knelt at her white feet and kissed them.

"Deborah!" called Ariella suddenly. "Deborah! come hither. I desire the fan brought from the inner chamber."

Deborah was shouting out an imprecatory Psalm at the top of her lungs. She did not hear.

"I will bring the fan," said Baruch. He rose and went slowly into the chamber of Ariella. With eyes which saw nothing, with a heart which perceived — who shall say how much? — he felt his way delicately across that sanctuary of purity and suffering. He raised his hands above the white bed where she slept the light sleep of pain. Groping, he found the large suspended fan, and returned with it quickly to the court. He came out of the chamber with his head bent like a man who could see, but would not.

Now this procedure on the part of Baruch was absolutely unconventional, — almost unpardonable by Oriental social ethics. But Baruch was not like other men. Ariella thanked him with an unconsciousness which in his turn made him feel abashed before her. His long, thin, sen-

sitive fingers touched the tissue drapery of her couch, hesitated, and trembled on the edge of her white robe.

"It is embroidered with lilies," he said, and laid it gently down. Ariella looked at him a little perplexed. What ailed Baruch?

"Deborah!" she called. "Deborah!"

But Deborah was cooking vegetables and fish for the noon meal, and was quite out of the way. In default of a matron a girl changes the subject. Ariella did this with the quick-wittedness of her sex. The talk between herself and Baruch was becoming uncomfortable.

"I understand," she said abruptly, "that the new Rabbi will discourse in the synagogue to-day. I should like to hear him — if I were like other girls."

"I would bring him hither, — I *will* bring him!" cried Baruch eagerly.

"Thou speakest like a good neighbor and a kind friend, Baruch. But that which thou sayest is as impossible as for me to arise and walk into Jerusalem."

"I am not sure" — began the blind man, and stopped short.

"Of what art thou then not sure?" asked Ariella.

"That the thing of which thou speakest is impossible, dear Ariella." Once in a great while,

Baruch called his young neighbor, dear Ariella. Their afflictions fostered between them space for an affection which both were too delicate to mismanage or to misunderstand.

“I know not what you mean,” said Ariella’s sweet, pathetic voice. “Many physicians have considered my case. My father avows he has paid his last shekel to the tribe of them on my behalf. Jerusalem? — I shall never set my foot beyond this courtyard, Baruch, unless I be borne by the hands of others. Sometimes, when it is not too much trouble, my father has carried me without that I may look abroad. I saw the sun set three times above the heights of Zion last summer. That was a pleasure, verily! He had grown large since I saw him last, — I thought within myself that he had come to manhood. He was a boy-sun when I looked upon him before!” Ariella laughed. She had a delightful laugh.

“He of whom we speak healeth many that are sick,” pursued Baruch.

“But not *me*,” said Ariella. “No man healeth *me*.”

“Ariella,” said the blind man solemnly, rising and lifting his sightless eyes to heaven, “as Jehovah heareth, I misdoubt sometimes if this man be not more than man like other men.”

"But you do not mean to say," cried Ariella, "that you take that view of this new favorite of the people? You do not believe he is" —

"Say it not," interrupted the blind man, — "say not the word. If it be he that was written of, verily time will prove. Almighty God will prove. For me, I wait. But I watch, Ariella. I may confess to *thee*. Yes, I watch."

At this moment, Baruch had the aspect of a man who saw, not the little things that others see, — earth, sky, sea, human faces, human art, and the incidents that appeal to human passions, — but invisible powers, and influences that are arguments; facts so fine that the normal action does not recognize them as forces. Baruch saw with the eyes of the soul.

"And what go ye out for to see?" asked the girl thoughtfully. "A prophet?"

"And perchance, yea, more than a prophet," said Baruch softly.

"I have thought," whispered Ariella, "that he was not like other men, — not like Malachi, my father, nor yet like Lazarus. Sometimes I have bethought me, Baruch, that he must be like thyself."

"Oh, Ariella! Nay, nay. Hush, Ariella!" Impulsively the blind man put his finger on her lip. The warm, sweet, soft flesh quivered beneath his finely sentient nerve. Baruch trem-

bled. The girl flushed. He withdrew his touch humbly, and bowed his head.

Neither of these two denied young people spoke again for some moments after this, and the man was the first to break the silence. He returned doggedly to his theme.

"It has been heavy upon my mind for some time past, Ariella. If he healeth others, why not thee? I would that he should see thee. Wouldst thou receive him if I brought him hither?"

"But he would not come, Baruch!" cried Ariella, the practical side of her nature coming uppermost, to the obliteration for the moment of her feeling of gratitude to Baruch.

"Verily he shall, then," said the blind man with decision.

"He could not heal me. *Nobody* can heal me," mourned Ariella. Baruch shook his head obstinately.

"Thou art young, thou art gentle and obedient, thou art maimed, and not diseased. He healeth the heavily smitten of God; yea, he healeth sorer sufferers. Why, Ariella, it is reported in Bethany that he hath healed the leprous, and sent them sound upon the ways of men."

"Even a leper," urged Ariella, with the easy despair of the incurable sick, "might not be so hard to heal as a girl like me."

"We will talk of it no more," said Baruch, with something like displeasure. "I thought to have comforted thee, Ariella."

"Forgive me, Baruch!" cried the girl. "Thou art all things kind and tender, and I am all things rude and wrong. I bless thee for thy dear thought, Baruch, heal he or heal he not. Thou thinkest for me like a brother. I never had a brother. Thou supportest me. *Thou* mightest heal me, Baruch, if will of man could do the deed. I am very tired, Baruch. I am in sore pain. Be patient with me."

"Thou mightest as well ask me to be patient with mine own heart," said Baruch, greatly moved. "Thou art dear to me, Ariella. Thou art dearer than" —

"Nay," cried the sick girl in agitation, coming to her senses, "nay, Baruch, hush! Tell me not. Say it not. Nay, I must not hear."

"I will call Deborah," said Baruch abruptly. "I must return home."

But poor Ariella, unused to the ways of men in moments of emotion, burst into tears and hid her face upon her arm.

"Go," she said, "go, then. We do each other no good. Go from me."

"Then I will not!" cried Baruch, with masculine waywardness. "I will not leave thee. Call Deborah, if thou choosest. I shall remain."

“And I,” said Ariella penitently, “will see the Rabbi, if thou sayest. Work thy will in the matter, Baruch. I shall not oppose thee.”

“Who knoweth,” cried Baruch passionately, “but thou too mayst be blessed by the virtue of that Wondrous Touch? Men say who have felt it that it is like fine, fleet, unhurting fire; that it runneth through the veins like the wings of life; that the body leaps and the spirit soars as ascending flame goeth heavenward in the wind.”

“Oh, that is it, — that is like it, — that is what I need!” said the sick girl plaintively. “Thinkest thou, Baruch, he *could* put the flame of life into a poor body such as mine?”

“Be brave,” urged Baruch. “Have courage, Ariella. Thou hast suffered with strength. Endure with hope. Thou hast more strength than courage.”

Now, it was noticeable in this conversation that it was only Ariella of whom Baruch spoke or Ariella thought. It never occurred to either of them to experiment with the new cure, or by the great wonder-worker, in behalf of this self-forgetting, afflicted, self-restrained, and loving man. For Baruch was born blind.

“Ariella!” murmured Baruch, “Ariella — ‘*Strength of God.*’ Thou hast a fair name, sweet friend.”

“It shameth me,” sighed Ariella.

CHAPTER IV.

TIBERIUS, Emperor of Rome ; Pontius Pilate, Procurator ; Caiaphas, High priest : thus ran the order of authority at our story's day. The father-in-law of Caiaphas, Annas, called High priest by courtesy, High priest in fact for seven years, and long since deposed, held his great rank and importance in the social world of Jerusalem. His was the extraordinary, known as the priestly family, which filled the sacred office, at a time when it was the toy of politics, for a proud period of fifty years. The position of Annas in Jerusalem was as unassailable as that of Solomon.

Lazarus approached the palace not entirely without a sense of awe. The rich and independent Pharisee was, nevertheless, a Jew. He and the ex-High priest, Sadducee, member of the Sanhedrim, and aristocrat to the sandals, owned the common national traditions, memories, prayers, and hopes. Politics and theology at their worst could not wither respect for the Temple and its officers out of the Jewish heart. It meant a good deal to the master-builder to have an order from the palace of Annas.

Lazarus descended the Mount of Olives, and crossed the celebrated bridge that spanned the brook Kidron and brought the traveler to the Temple gates. He passed reverently through the outer courts of the Temple, and without delay-
ing there crossed the Tyropœon Valley by another well-worn and well-built bridge, and so reached Mount Zion, the mountain of sanctity and royalty, the home of priests and palaces. Here glittered the imposing castle of Herod the Great, that prince who had two passions, one for building and one for murder. Here stood the more modest palace of the Maccabees, the palace of Caiaphas, and here the haughty home of Annas.

It was a stately building of stone, fitted and furnished with wood, and much decorated after the severe method of the race. No sculpture was admitted to the Jewish dwelling; even the human or animal figure was forbidden. The graven image savored of idolatry and Babylon, and the outer courts of pagan temples. The decorator among these stern and obedient people had small leeway for the wings of his fame. He worked strenuously, soberly, honestly, and atoned for freedom of imagination by severity of labor.

The palace was large, of course; so large as to contain a number of courts, — the great court

and its minor imitations. This meant vast convenience according to the Oriental standard; hospitality, and space for it; family comforts and cool evening rendezvous, and room enough for the women on their side of the palace.

Lazarus took in with the keen eye of the craftsman the fine points of the palace, as he stood waiting in the antechamber for the presence of Annas the priest. This chamber was spacious and cool; fine rugs lay upon its marble floor; others hung across ottomans ranged along the sides of the walls. The sparsity of furniture in an Oriental home is consistent with the greatest wealth. Lazarus did not sit. He observed thoughtfully. The size of the palace made it comparatively quiet; the soft steps of slaves passing to and fro, with the slight fla-flap of bare brown heels, gave the only interruption to the dreamy quiet of the spot. Lazarus yielded to the pleasant influence; he felt that it was well to be a man of the world; he remembered his middle-class belongings, his heresies, his entanglement with the unpopular Rabbi; and for the first time he bethought himself how this proud Sadducee was likely to regard him.

"A mere workman, of course," said Lazarus half aloud. "A carpenter, fit only to take his orders."

Now, Lazarus was not accustomed to be so-

cially looked down upon; in his own class he was important, authoritative. He was in the habit of working chiefly for his own class; he found the new sensation not wholly pleasant; he straightened his fine, manly figure, and threw back his young head.

At this moment the luxurious silence of the palace was broken by a sweet sound. It was the clear ring-ringing of a girl's laugh.

Lazarus started and stared. What a laugh it was! Verily, he thought, in all Judea there was no gayer. Who, pray, was so merry, and wherefore, in this lordly place? Lazarus looked eagerly into the great court. As he did so, a flash like passing light shimmered and swept before his eyes. A woman's form seemed to him to flit before him; yet, indeed, he could not aver that it was a woman. It was singing light, it was flying music. The young man drew the inference that a woman was implied in this phenomenon. If it was a woman, she was clothed in Tyrian purple, and her figure glittered with gold and moved like fire. If it was a vision, it wore the colors of the sky and earth at their bridal, and took to itself the wings of seraphim.

Lazarus stood color-struck, wonder-struck, feverishly impetuous. No person was in sight, except a slave crossing the court, with a silver

pitcher poised upon a turbaned head. The slave was sixty, and a man.

At this moment a voice said coldly : —

“Do I behold Lazarus the Builder?”

Lazarus turned, embarrassed. In this awkward position of spying for women in his palace, Annas the High priest must needs discover him.

But Lazarus recovered himself like a man of experience, and, bowing with grave courtesy, looked his interlocutor easily in the eye. It was a piercing eye. It was a reverend figure. Tall, spare, calm, and imposing, the High priest stood even before his builder, like the Ark before the Race. His simplest attitude expressed the consciousness of authority and sanctity, no more to be disturbed than the sense of royalty in a prince imperial, heir to the throne of centuries. His hair and beard, uncut and finely preserved, flowed like a silver stream upon his shoulders and his breast. His gray eyebrows were thick, and met in a straight frown. Annas was dressed with the splendor belonging to his caste. The ex-High priest retained, with indifference to the strictest law, the blue robe and fine ephod of his former office. The skirt of the robe was trimmed with pomegranates woven in blue, red, and crimson ; he no longer wore the tinkling bells which rang between each pomegranate, nor the towering mitre of active, priestly life. But take him altogether,

he was an imposing and glittering figure. He wore all he could.

"You are Lazarus the Builder," repeated the High priest.

"I am he," replied Lazarus. "I await your pleasure."

"I am told," pursued Annas, "that you are a skilled workman."

"I am a contractor," answered Lazarus, with the slightest possible hauteur. "I am a master-mechanic."

"Think you," proceeded Annas, with a little lifting of the eyebrow lines, "that you can remedy certain defects which exist in the construction of a portion of our palace with the quality of execution plainly, as you perceive," — Annas waved his hand about the antechamber, — "necessary to the harmony of the house?"

"I should hope," replied Lazarus, with a slight flush, "that nothing which I attempted to do, or contracted to do, would prove unworthy of any position in which I should venture to place my work."

"You set a considerable value upon yourself, it seems, my worthy sir," said the priest, with a sharp look.

"Upon *myself* none that may not become a self-respecting citizen. Upon my *work*, yea verily, I do set the value of trained skill and honest exercise thereof. It is not a low one."

"Hath it a high standard in the coin of the land?" inquired Annas, with the negligence of a sacred man who is apt in striking a worldly bargain.

"Show me the work," replied Lazarus concisely. "I can make my terms at sight of it."

Annas summoned a slave, who forthwith conducted Lazarus into the extreme limit of the palace. The High priest, lingering, it seemed for no reason in particular, unless it were the sense of dignity to be found in walking by himself, followed immediately.

"I desire," he said, "certain changes made in the women's portion of the palace. A couple of cedar pillars in the court appear to me to need repair. One hath tottered; and the carving hath a ragged appearance. I may replace them with stone, for they contradict our fashion of architecture. You will oblige me by examining the matter."

Lazarus obeyed in silence, testing the pillars both by his eye and his hand, with the rapid observation of skilled experience.

"This one," he said decidedly, "is positively dangerous. It might yield at any moment. It should be propped before another sun setteth over the palace roof. The cedar wood was ill selected and decayeth, and is no more to be trusted than an idolater from Babylon. The

other might be strengthened. It is better to renew them both and recarve the lintels with the pillars."

"Your price?" demanded the High priest, without further comment.

"Three thousand denarii."

"It is too large a sum, sir builder."

"As you please," said Lazarus coldly.

"I cannot pay it."

"That is your affair."

"You will take two thousand?"

"I will take my price."

"Reconsider, then, the importance of the undertaking, — the reputation to be gained by this contract."

"My reputation, such as it is, is made," replied Lazarus. "It does not depend upon one contract. Jerusalem knoweth Lazarus the builder."

"You will reduce your terms — say twenty-five hundred denarii" —

"I have said," answered Lazarus, with dignity.

"We will consider our conference at an end, then," replied the High priest haughtily.

"As you please," said Lazarus again.

He bowed respectfully. Annas made a courteous gesture of dismissal and farewell. Lazarus left the palace in silence.

Certain business of the synagogue took him to the house of Malachi on the way home ; and he had an errand to perform for Martha at the home of Rachel, where blind Baruch delayed him to ask further questions concerning the Rabbi who healed. It was quite late in the evening when Lazarus reached his own dwelling. Martha bustled out to meet him with the announcement that a servant of the High priest awaited him. Lazarus without undue haste summoned the man, who reported that his master desired the presence of the builder at an early hour of the following day. Lazarus obeyed this command, which did not surprise him, and presented himself in the cool of the morning at the palace. Annas did not personally appear. Lazarus was received by an officer of the High priest, who requested that the work upon the pillar might begin at once, and officially accepted the terms of the builder.

“My master requires to know that you will begin ; if there is a question of security to the women of his household, he desires the greatest possible haste.”

“My men and material shall be upon the spot at the third hour,” replied the master-mechanic promptly.

“The High priest has felt concern in the matter,” observed the officer. “The apartments

of his daughter are within that portion of the palace."

Lazarus bowed with dignity; he made no reply.

Lazarus had the conscience of the ideal mechanic, and his word was his deed. At the third hour, in fact, the work upon the palace began. It proved to be a serious job, and Lazarus undertook it seriously. Before the setting of the sun, the dangerous pillars were replaced by temporary substitutes, which insured the safety of the portico: the finer mechanism of repair could thus go on with more leisurely thoroughness. Lazarus had enthusiasm in the work, and with this bright tool it went forward busily. He absorbed himself in his duty. For several days he found nothing at the palace to divert him from his absorption. Only the officers and servants met him. Annas did not again present himself to the builder.

One day, toward the cool of the day, — it had been exhaustingly hot, — Lazarus, wearied with excessive application to his task, seated himself in the shade of the palace wall to rest and observe at a little distance the labors of his men. He leaned against the wall that the coolness of the stone might penetrate his fevered flesh; and the better to revive himself removed his turban for a moment, exposing to full view his fine

head and the manly beauty of his appearance. A slight stir behind him attracted his attention, and he started, standing, turban in hand. He saw a pleasant sight.

Between two carved pillars the figure of a woman — of a young woman — stood hesitating. She seemed uncertain whether she wished to venture further, and equally certain that she did not wish to retreat. She was a tall, resplendent, royal girl, haughty of mien, yet so womanly of contour and color that her coldness sat upon her like a garment that might be burned off, or blown from her. She gave in a glance the impression of a woman whom the fire or the whirlwind of feeling might toss into a melting, yielding creature, yet who might never melt, or never yield, or never feel. She was exceedingly beautiful in a dazzling, luxurious way : she had a select air like precious wood, rare tapestry, or a carefully set gem. She wore a robe of gold-colored tissue, inwrought with purple silk, and bearing a deep silk fringe headed by half-pearls. Pearls of value hung from her arms and lay upon her neck. These moved with her quick breath and with her light, swaying motions as she stood uncertain.

The lady and the builder looked each other steadily in the eye ; for she had removed her veil, and, if the truth must be told, she did not

hurry to put it on again. She had a pretty little air of defiance. She was accustomed to please herself. She was too far above reach of ordinary men to be misunderstood. What was Lazarus that she should, at the threshold of her own apartment, in the palace of her father, veil herself — as if it mattered — from his mechanic?

Lazarus was the first to speak. Now he did not say the expected thing at all. He said : —

“Do you desire me to depart?”

The girl gave him one fine, flashing look. If one of the pillars had arisen and discoursed in the Temple, she would have found it perhaps no more unlooked-for.

“If you do,” she returned, “the palace will tumble down on me.”

She laughed. Lazarus felt his soul leap within his body at that light laugh. He knew the soft torrent of music. He had heard it that first day in the palace.

“By the faith of my fathers!” he said unto himself, “Judea containeth not another sound like that.” Moved by he knew not what impulse stronger than all the little aspects of life, the young Jew looked at the girl as if his daring eyes and her fearless face were the only facts in the world. For perhaps the first time in his life Lazarus spoke without reflection or previ-

sion. For that moment he became a free soul : he ceased to be a cautious Jew.

“ Verily,” he said, “ I know not who thou art, nor how I should address thee ; but this I know, — thou art music become woman ; and I have pleasure in the sound thereof.”

“ And thou,” returned the maiden, with a vivid blush, “ art a bold youth. Yet I think thou meanest no ill. I fear thee not.”

“ Thou mightest as well fear thy father or thy priest ! ” cried Lazarus hotly.

“ My father is my priest,” replied the girl, waving her hand lightly. “ Thou beholdest the daughter of Annas.”

“ And thou thy father’s builder.”

“ Thou hast spoken with Zahara,” pursued the daughter of Annas.

“ And thou with Lazarus,” replied the contractor.

“ I have seen no such manner of man, among my father’s retinue. Thou dost interest me,” observed Zahara serenely. “ I have little to interest me,” she added. “ It is a dull thing to be a woman.”

“ It is a divine thing ! ” murmured Lazarus impetuously.

“ I did not understand you, sir,” suggested the maiden demurely.

“ I shall come again ! ” cried Lazarus under

his breath. "To-morrow, — another day, — many days. I shall see thee! I shall see thee again!"

"Art thou then so sure?" mocked Zahara. She covered him with a glance which seemed to set his still soul aflame, as a field of husks flameth in accidental fire, drew her white and golden veil suddenly like a bright cloud across her face, and vanished from his sight.

CHAPTER V.

LAZARUS walked home like a man blinded by light. His head swam giddily. The blood leaped in his veins. The stately form of the Temple shook before him as he passed. The familiar outline of Mount Olivet quivered against his eyeballs. The figures of people in the road wavered and enlarged and dwindled like phantasmagoria seen in mist. He felt as if he moved above them, on a strange high level, and saw the world over their heads. He seemed to himself like a spirit escaped from the body and set free to wander at will. He fled, he floated, he drifted across the currents of common life. He knew not whither he would go, nor wherefore; he only knew that he fluttered upon a sea of delight and despair. He only knew that he was alive as a bird is, or a wind, or a strong tree, or some bright, brute thing that has neither conscience, nor intellect, nor foresight; only the sense of living and the joy of it. The only fact he had ever dreamed of that could separate soul and body in like manner and give a man his utter freedom was the fact of death. Now here

was another, unknown to his grave speculation, a thing till then as unfathomed by the calm and thoughtful Jew as the basin of the sea; here was the fact of love.

To Lazarus, the busy mechanic, the sober householder, the steadiest of citizens, the most religious of devotees, the purest of men, the serenest of spirits, — unto Lazarus had occurred the experience which shuts itself as an unsealed book from most human souls. Lazarus had been overtaken by that rare and mighty angel, — Instantaneous Love.

Now, this godly young Jew knew no more what to do with this state of things than if he had been cast bound and blindfold into the Lake of Gennesaret in a midnight tempest, and deserted there. At first he was only conscious of the fact of sinking and of the necessity of the fact. Then he became aware of the struggle and struck out.

“It is a dream,” he muttered. “I forget it. I awake. It passeth. I do dream.”

He drew his firm hand over his eyes confusedly: it was as if he would brush her image away. Nay, then! She was no such film. Flesh and blood will not melt at a sign of dismissal. Shall a man wave a woman out of being by a gesture? She standeth tall and haughty, queenly, a form of power and a face

of flashing light. She defieth his signal. She will not be dismissed. See! how she holdeth her ground, mockingly, merrily, — no apparition she. This is no dream, godly Lazarus. Warm as the bounding blood in the veins of a soft, strong woman, the vision claspeth thee.

Lazarus, as he walked, staggered under the pressure of it. It seemed to him as if that sweet, proud creature melted into his very being, and as if the drawing of his breath hung upon her curved lips.

“Zahara!” he murmured, “Zahara!”

When he spoke her name aloud it seemed to him as if he began to possess her. He threw back his head and trod proudly. He walked in a sweet delirium.

One of his workmen followed him, and asked him some pressing question about the work at the palace.

“What sayest thou?” asked Lazarus confusedly. The man repeated his inquiry. His master replied with a few irrelevant, hurrying words, and hastened on; he felt a desperate need of being alone.

He got home and into his own apartments as quickly as he might. Martha buzzed about some disturbing trifle, but he said: —

“I pray thee, my sister, leave the matter alone. I am weary, and would be at peace.”

“It is important,” persisted Martha. “I must talk to somebody.”

“Converse with Mary, then,” said her brother wearily.

“One might as well talk to the evening star,” cried Martha.

“I will listen, then,” said Lazarus, a little smitten at the conscience; for he was a good brother, and not a man to disregard a woman’s chatter.

“Nay, then!” answered Martha resentfully, “I have naught to say to you.”

Lazarus passed on into his chamber, and shut the doors. He looked about the familiar place perplexedly. He felt that a new person crossed the threshold; the man Lazarus, whom he knew, had passed it for the last time. He did not recognize himself. He was not used to dreams, and to strange views of common facts. He had lived a plain, busy, pious life. Nothing like this had ever come within his knowledge. His quiet nature was now a tempest. All his standards and codes were capsized like little shallops in a sudden sea. In a moment, in the twinkling of a soft eye, a woman had entered his calm world, and all the kingdoms of his nature, and the glory of them, were beneath her feet. He wished that he could have laid his reverent lips to them,—those veiled feet. This eminently

discreet young man did indeed cherish that desperate and daring desire. How gently her garments flowed about them! — as a modest maiden's should, — concealing them in long, soft folds, as if she trod upon morning clouds. Her drapery, veil beneath veil, inclosed her jealously. It was a kind of haughtiness in her, it was a kind of higher modesty, not to draw the veil across her face at first glance of him, — her father's workman. Lazarus recalled this with half a delight and half a stinging shame. His first thought was: —

“She is not as other women. She doeth her own will. She is a princess.”

His second: —

“She is the daughter of Annas. And I am Lazarus, builder to the High priest, her father.”

What was he, verily, in her sight, that he should dare lift up so much as his thoughts unto Zahara?

It was dark in his sumptuous rooms. The prosperous man paced them like a beggar. In an hour he felt pauperized. He had always been so sure of his standing in the world; his possessions and his skill had meant credit and content; he had been honored; he had felt that his preference would be regarded by the women whom he knew; it had never occurred to the rich builder and prominent ecclesiastic that a

woman could become to him an unattainable fact in life. His large, mild eyes flashed in the dark rooms.

“I am defied!” he said aloud. “I am denied!” What would Annas, the High priest; Annas, member of the Sanhedrim; Annas, the Sadducee, with Lazarus, his builder, the Pharisee, if he so much as took the proud name of Zahara upon his lips? Truly, as a slave is hurled from his master’s presence, so would the father of Zakara deal with the man whose veriest shadow should fall across barriers dearer to Jewish convention than life itself. Annas was the aristocrat of society and of theology; Lazarus, the bourgeois and dissenter. Nay, the very wealth, position, influence, of the builder were likely to be sources of offense to the patrician. Better were it for Lazarus if he came like a beggar, with “no help but God” (as his name did read), and sat upon the palace stairs; the High priest would have regarded him as a properly classified person, who knew his place and kept it, flung him a handful of coin, and observed him no more than the ass that brought the packs of provender at the bidding of the slaves. Who knew? A man might snatch the girl at such a vantage, and away with her.

Lazarus checked his feverish walk, threw himself upon a rug, and in the prostrate position

dear to Oriental emotion, hid his face and battled with himself. Lazarus was confounded at his own condition. Within himself he found a foreign enemy ; he felt himself unlearned in the tactics of a strange war. He was not ready to yield, but he knew not how to fight. He did not even give the name of love to his swift and overwhelming passion. He called it Zahara, and studied it no more.

“I shall see her to-morrow,” he thought: then he remembered that he might never see her on any morrow.

“But I shall!” he cried. “But I will!”

Then he bethought him that “shall” and “will” were helpless slaves in the hopeless situation. He was accustomed to doing as he chose. He had not been thwarted before. He had had his way. He now began to understand that he had never really wished for anything until this hour. This new suffering, like a wild creature unchained, sprang upon him; he felt himself like a person wrestling with claws and teeth.

At intervals he repeated her name aloud: —

“Zahara! Zahara!”

The very sound of it seemed to him to scintillate. What a gorgeous name!

“Zahara — *The Bright One*. Zahara — *Dazzling Whiteness*. I worship thee, here in my dark room, Zahara,” whispered Lazarus.

As he lay there, prostrate, with his face upon his arms, a light and timid sound aroused him. It was the voice of Mary, his sister, in the court beyond his doors.

“Art thou ill, my brother?”

“Nay, then, my sister, I am well.”

“Comest thou not forth that I may speak with thee?”

“Is it a matter of import?” demanded Lazarus.

“It can wait,” said Mary gently. “I would not intrude upon thee.”

“Thou hast not the soul of the intruder,” replied Lazarus, with the hearty voice of one coming cordially from the reveries of passion to the realities of home. Mary could do as she would with Lazarus. He aroused himself, and came out into the court. Mary was alone. It was late, cool evening; the brother and sister sat down upon the nearest rug, and settled themselves comfortably. Mary looked at Lazarus, but not keenly; her eyes were gentle and sweet. He met their gaze with a strange sense of irresponsible guilt. He thought, “Mary would not understand. Mary could not understand.”

“I have somewhat to say unto thee,” began Mary timidly. “Martha would have spoken of the matter, but thou repelledst her.”

“Martha annoyed me,” said Lazarus shortly. “Thou never doest that.”

"He hath been here," said Mary, with unwonted abruptness.

"He? Here? Thou meanest" —

"Whom could I mean? We know but One," replied Mary gravely. "The Master hath visited us."

"In my absence?"

"In thine absence. He remained with us until the twelfth hour; we pressed him to tarry further, but he would not, though Martha made ready the upper chamber and said many words to him. But he departed. He remained not."

Lazarus was silent a moment.

"If thou hadst been here," observed Mary, "I think he would have tarried."

"I am sorry," avowed Lazarus.

"Why, of course!" cried Mary, with more than usual spirit. It seemed to her as if there were a singular lack of animation in her brother's tone and manner. Did he exhibit the scorching grief she expected? Or only a tender regret?

"Lazarus," she said, with something like reproach. "Nearer and dearer to him than thyself he hath but one other friend among all that name the name of his disciples, and that thou knowest."

"Thou speakest of John the fisherman, and thou speakest truly, Mary. The Master loveth *him*."

“And thee! And thee, likewise, Lazarus! His own lips have said it. His own deed hath proved it. It seems to me that thou speakest coldly of him.”

“God forbid!” cried Lazarus, starting. “I have not wavered. If any may be loyal to him and to his cause, I am the man. My heart can never chill toward him.”

But as he spoke the words, a feeling almost of terror came over Lazarus. With the sudden warming of this strong and splendid flame which that day within his nature had shot fire, would other feeling, *must* other feeling, cool by hot compassion? Was it possible that he, Lazarus, beloved of One on whom the hopes of the Race were hanging, tenderly selected by that sweet and supreme nature to the affectionate attitude of intimate friend, — was it possible that Lazarus could forget the Messiah of his people, the Jesus of his personal loyalty, for the glance of a girl's eye, but yesterday unknown?

“It grieveth me,” said Lazarus penitently, — “it grieveth me that I saw him not. How seemed he? What said he?”

“Worn,” answered Mary sadly, — “worn and pale; his countenance hath a transparent look, and his step betokens a great weariness. Verily, Lazarus, the sight went to my heart.”

“What said he?” pursued Lazarus, with increasing sympathy.

“His words were few,” replied Mary, in a tone of awe. “His words were few, and precious.”

“Canst thou not recall them for me, my sister?”

“Nay, my brother; it is as if I tried to recall the rustling of the wings of cherubim above the altar. I have a sense of sacred sound that bore my soul above my body; of words I fear I can tell thee but too few. It ever seemeth to me an unbecoming thing to take his words upon one’s lips unwarily.”

“Of what did he discourse, then? — if thou ventur’st not to quote his language, for which, indeed, I do commend thee, Mary; and better were it for him if every one of our number had so wise a conscience. We have tongues too many and too easy in our flock. I have myself admired his own habit in this regard. He speaketh with more dumbness, and is silent with more voice, than any man it hath been my lot to meet in this world. It grieves me more and more that I did miss him. Verily, he is dear to me,” urged Lazarus, with rising feeling. “Tell me of what he did discourse.”

“Of the Roman threat and the Jewish hatred,” said Mary mournfully; “of the barriers set before the Father’s Truth at every side, — but it was of the Truth that he did speak, and of the

Father. He said few words concerning himself ; he careth not for himself, Lazarus ! He valueth not his own safety, nor his sleep, nor food, nor rest, nor health, nor hope of any human comfort. He careth only for his Father, and for miserable people ! ”

“ He is of the Father,” said Lazarus solemnly. “ He is not as we. This world and the ways thereof do not tear him as with us ; he is like one who treadeth unharmed a cage of wild beasts. I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of his sandals, O my sister ! ”

Lazarus bowed himself unto the ground, and drew his breath with the resurgent motion of a man who would weep were he not a man. Mary looked on with awe and perplexity. She knew not how to comfort a distress which she knew not how to try to understand. Sweet, serene, distant, untouched by passion, she came no nearer to Lazarus at that moment than a pure, cold star.

“ I must see him,” said Lazarus, abruptly controlling himself. “ I have need of him. I must suffer no longer time to elapse. It is the days of many weeks since I have looked upon his face. It dimmeth before my heart ; yet, as the Lord heareth me, my heart doth cling to him ! I must make it my business, if it be not my chance, — I must see the Nazarene.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE morning rose like a princess. The sun was resplendent. The trumpet-call to early prayer rang through the bright air with a long, quivering cry. Lazarus, at the summons, stood at his window, — at the window looking towards Jerusalem, as the custom demanded, — and bowed his face in silent petition. His soul was lifted; his nerve was calmed; the fever of last night, — where was it? Laid by the cool, pure morning breath? Or healed by the diviner art that comes of holy thought? Lazarus felt like a convalescent; he wondered at yesterday's attack of feeling; he thought of the daughter of Annas with a curious sense of humiliation; she seemed to elude him as a dream when one awaketh; he reproached himself that his emotion had pursued her. As he stood at prayer he had the heart of a penitent.

At the morning meal his sister served him more silently than usual: perhaps this was the reflection of his own mood; or perhaps the soothing influence of the guest of yesterday lingered yet upon the household. Even Martha was

subdued. Her face wore its best look. And Lazarus had said : —

“Forgive me, Martha,” when he came forth in the morning.

Now Martha was so used to being the one to be forgiven that the reversal of position gave her satisfaction. It put her in excellent humor when another member of the family fretted, and had to acknowledge it.

Lazarus parted from his sisters pleasantly, and went to his work with a quiet, thoughtful mien.

“I shall arrange it soon,” he had said to Mary. “I shall make it my duty to search for him in Jerusalem until I find him.”

Lazarus fully intended to do so. He made his way to the palace with a brisk step.

At the palace the workmen were already astir. Fine carving upon the renewed cedar pillars was the order of the day ; it required the closest supervision ; Lazarus surrendered himself to the work. He had an artist's nature, rudely cultivated as it was, and crudely expressed in such limited ways as his avocation permitted. He directed with conscience and enthusiasm the carving of a pattern of vines and pomegranates, from which all outline of the human or animal figure was religiously excluded ; a bas-relief of little pillars supporting a miniature portico

peered between the vines. Lazarus became closely interested in the execution of this design. His day's work set in prosperously. The entrances to the women's portion of the palace were carefully curtained. No one but officers of the household appeared.

"Annas the High priest is gratified with the handiwork of Lazarus the builder," said one of these men, with a pompous graciousness. Lazarus bowed.

"This is as it should be," he replied, with a slight hauteur. He returned to his task with renewed absorption. Not well pleased, as the day wore on, with the execution of certain details, the master-builder rebuked his artists with some emphasis. One of them, restless under the criticism, threw down his burin, and irritably said:—

"If I cannot please thee, I will try no longer. Finish the work thyself, Lazarus."

"Nay, then, I will!" cried Lazarus, and forthwith did proceed to make good his word.

Now, as he worked in this impulsive manner, carving after the imagination of his own heart upon the cedar pillar, and scarcely knowing what manner of thought his hand executed, Lazarus let his soul free: it took wings, and fled from him, and bore him whithersoever he would not. It was high, hot noon. His artists

and workmen had betaken themselves without the palace, for resting-space and a meal. The palace was quiet. Lazarus, adream before the pillar, stood alone, carving assiduously. Suddenly his hand fell like the hand of palsy at his side. Through the stillness of the warm, soft air, a low laugh rang like a muffled bell. The tool dropped from the hand of Lazarus. The blood rushed to his face.

“Zahara!” he murmured.

She stood indeed behind him, — a blazing, scowling beauty; her eyes mocked him; her full lips pouted; with one hand she pointed to the carving on the pillar.

“Verily, for a devout Jew, thou hast done a fine deed, sir builder.”

Done? What had he done? Behind the carven vines, behind the trellised portico, behind the miniature pillars of the designs, the cedar wood gave the faint outline of a figure, a girl’s figure, hiding modestly, with flowing robes between the leaves.

“The Sanhedrim would be ill pleased,” teased Zahara. “What an ecclesiastical crime thou hast committed!”

“Is it a crime in *thine* eyes?” demanded the builder hotly. His own regarded her manfully. His urgent tenderness looked out of them. A wave of daring love rolled over him. He would

be as he was! He felt a sudden, sacred right to the impetuosity of his own nature.

Zahara returned his ardent gaze with a queenly look; then — for she could not help it — her own eyes drooped before his, less like a queen than like a woman, and more like a sensitive girl than either.

“Nay, then,” she said softly, “I wrote not the Law, but Moses. Thou hast broken no stone table of mine.”

“I could not help it,” said Lazarus impulsively. “I cannot forget thee. Thou art in the thought of my heart and the dream of my mind, and thou controllest the deed of my hand, as the wind controlleth a boat upon the sea.”

“My father,” observed Zahara demurely, “might not find the carving agreeable.” She had veiled herself as she spoke, and stood sheltered, a lovely, swaying figure, half retreating as she spoke.

“Thou warnest me wisely,” said Lazarus. “Annas the High priest shall not be disturbed by the weakness of a moment in Lazarus the builder. The carving shall be righted according to the letter of the Law. Fear not, Zahara. I have done no error past a remedy.”

As he spoke, he smote the figure with a passionate gesture. The cedar wood gave out a rich perfume like the protest of a creature wounded.

"Ah me!" cried Zahara, wincing prettily.
"Thou hast hurt the poor girl!"

The face of Lazarus became very pale. Zahara could not know the emotion she aroused by her little feminine play. If she had known, would she have spared him? Lazarus thought not. His manhood roused itself to sudden self-defense. His eyes gave Zahara one blinding look. But his lips remained obstinately mute. With quick, strong, experienced strokes, he struck the graven image from the pillar, and covered with thick foliage the spot where the outline of the hiding girl had stood. As he worked, he did not even look around to see if Zahara were still there. He believed she would stay. And stay she did.

"Behold," he said at last, turning, "she is gone. She is blotted from existence. The law condemneth me not if I kill what I have created. Does that please thee, Zahara?"

"It concerneth me not," said Zahara, in a low voice.

"Thou needest not to remind me of that," urged Lazarus. "Too well I know the truth. Too sad a truth it is."

"But," suggested Zahara timidly, "if I were that girl, — that carved girl, — I do not think it would please me to be killed and forgotten so soon, sir builder."

"*Zahara!*" cried Lazarus, in a voice of rapture.

"Zahara? Zahara?" called one of her women from within.

Zahara made a quick movement with both of her fine hands: it was a gesture of entreaty; it was a gesture of dismissal; it was a willful, tender, capricious untranslatable action. Lazarus stood gazing steadfastly after her. But Zahara had gone.

That evening, before the workmen departed, the stiff rustling of the priestly robe announced to the builder, for the first time since he had begun his work, the presence of Annas. The artists and carpenters bowed with reverence before the High priest. Lazarus saluted him respectfully.

"I come to observe your repairs," remarked Annas. "They have given me satisfaction hitherto. It is a workmanlike undertaking, honestly executed and well conceived."

Lazarus silently bowed.

"You will not find it too long a task, I infer?" inquired the High priest politely.

"Not beyond a week further," quickly replied Lazarus. As he spoke the words he felt a sick sinking at the heart, never known before to the sensation of his peaceful and uneventful life. A week? Only a week? Then was Zahara no

more liable to cross the orbit of his life than Annas the High priest to invite him to supper.

"Of course I wish the work thoroughly finished," continued Annas with a keen look, "even at the cost of a few extra denarii, if need were. It is too good a matter not to be a perfect one."

"I need no more time," replied Lazarus slowly. A struggle set in upon his nature. How easy to prolong the period of service at the palace, — the period of delight and denial within the blessed possibility of her presence who was becoming to him, he felt at that moment, incredibly, unbearably dear! The longing of the lover battled with the conscience of the artisan. Lazarus felt that he never knew before the meaning of a sense of honor.

"No," he repeated firmly. "No, the work can be done within the period agreed. Why should I intrude upon your courtesy?"

"You are an honorable person," observed the High priest graciously.

"I have enjoyed the work," conceded Lazarus. "It would have been agreeable to me had the palace required my service further. It does not."

"At some future day it may do so," continued Annas urbanely. Lazarus felt his lip tremble and his color change. He bent over a tool and tried its edge upon his finger.

"Your politeness is beyond my deserts," he replied, with Oriental suavity. At that moment he felt an emotion perfectly new to him : a sense of kindness to the old man replaced his instinctive antagonism ; the father of Zahara became interesting to him.

"You have wounded your finger upon the tool," observed Annas.

"It is nothing," said Lazarus, binding the cut with embarrassment.

"What, I pray, is your design at this point?" inquired Annas, critically observing the carving of the pillar. He placed his priestly finger upon the spot where the little "graven image" of Zahara had been changed (like a heathen dryad) into a waving tree.

"The foliage appears to me thick in this spot," continued Annas. "Is it a Greek imagination?"

"It is my own design," said Lazarus, with heightened color. Annas gave the builder a searching look, — who could have said why? Certainly for no suspicion of the truth that could by possibility have been apparent to the High priest. Both men felt uncomfortable.

"You are a Pharisee, I understand," said Annas, abruptly changing the subject.

"Such is my ecclesiastical position," returned Lazarus, with dignity.

“Know you aught of these popular disturbances, these religious riots, of the people? You seem to be a man of intelligence, in some respects above your situation in life. Have you familiarity with these pretenders, — these false prophets and idols of the populace, who lead them astray, like sheep shepherded by wolves?”

“I know none such,” answered Lazarus proudly.

“There is one, — he calleth himself the Prophesied; he nameth the sacred name of the Messiah; he teacheth as a Rabbi, and assumeth to perform the miraculous, bewitching the people vainly. Know you this man?”

“I know none such,” repeated Lazarus firmly.

“I refer,” said the High priest, “to the Nazarene. Know you the man?”

“Intimately,” said Lazarus, without a moment’s hesitation. “I both know and do revere him.”

“Surely,” said the High priest with severity, “you put no trust in his preposterous claim?”

At this moment a light flashed before the face of Lazarus, and a faint perfume of attar of roses filled the hot air. Zahara, robed in silver-wrought white, veiled in pale purple gauze, floated up to her father and laid her small hand upon his arm.

“Go thou within, my child,” said the priest,

with a caressing frown. "I do discourse with the builder."

"Let me stay," pleaded Zahara. "I will not interrupt thee. I but pass across the court to give an order to my women. Let me stay a moment, father."

Her brilliant eyes, moving above her veil like suns above a cloud, turned slowly toward the builder. In them not a scintilla of recognition burned. Zahara leaned nonchalantly against her father's arm. She was the portrait of indifference. Lazarus returned her glance with deferent distance. His heart leaped within him that she gave herself this little play before her father: she cherished a pretty secret between them, — she, Zahara! He set his teeth with the struggle of concealment, and covered his ardent eyes with a soft film of remoteness. He drew himself together manfully, and took up the conversation where Zahara had snapped it.

"Concerning the Nazarene" — he began.

"Oh," interrupted Zahara disdainfully, "the *Nazarene*!"

Lazarus ceased abruptly. His sensitive color left him.

"Continue," ordered the High priest. "Are you, then, one of his rabble, — one of his people?"

Zahara regarded Lazarus now quite steadily ;

her beautiful eyes expressed astonishment and displeasure. Lazarus hesitated for a perceptible instant. Then he answered distinctly: "I see no reason why I should deny that I number myself among those who do follow the doctrine of Jesus the Nazarene."

A well-bred silence filled the court of the palace at this announcement.

"Young man," said the High priest coldly, "I would fain caution you against this person. He is a dangerous fellow."

Zahara said nothing. She swept upon Lazarus one eloquent look: it seemed to him to express command, reproach, regret, and something else besides, — was it entreaty? On the motion of this look she stirred, turned, and floated across the court. One of her women, a pet slave, a young girl, came to her and put an arm about her with pretty, feminine familiarity.

"Ah, then, Rebecca!" cried Zahara. Lazarus could have hurled Rebecca over the palace wall.

"Continue your work," commanded Annas, with a sudden change of expression. "I interrupt you no longer."

The two men exchanged cold salutations. The High priest walked away in his stateliest attitude. The builder bowed his head over the pillar where the little graven image had been carved out of existence.

The next day one of the officers of the palace remained on duty within the portico. The man yawned and fidgeted; he had plainly nothing to do. The High priest did not reappear. Zahara's curtains were closely drawn. Once Lazarus heard, or fancied that he heard, her laugh and call: —

“Rebecca!”

But he had only his fancy for his content.

“It is a dull day,” said the officer, sullenly. “What have you done, sir builder, that I should be stationed in this stupid post all day?” Lazarus lifted his head and stared at the fellow.

“Verily,” said the officer, “I believe you know not any more than I do. It must be some whim of the High priest. He aboundeth in them. I shall make known to him that you are quite innocent of it at all events.”

“Innocent of what?” cried Lazarus.

The officer gave a short, sharp laugh. Perhaps unconsciously, perhaps intentionally, his conspicuous head-dress inclined by an almost imperceptible motion toward the women's portion of the palace.

Lazarus worked on in silence. His heart was sore within him. He felt humiliated to no end, and angered for no cause, and disturbed without hope of restoration.

“I am become a miserable man,” thought

Lazarus. "Would to God that I had never struck a nail into the palace of the High priest! Would to God that I had never seen" —

But he could not, or he did not, finish the sentence. Better to have seen her, — oh, better to have seen Zahara by a hundred-fold of what she cost him! Lazarus could not imagine himself now without having seen Zahara.

"We have but six days' work upon the palace left," said one of the artists, with a sigh of relief.

"Six days?" cried Lazarus. "Yes, you are right; it is but six days."

"It might even be completed in five," suggested an industrious workman, "if these fellows were not so insufferably lazy."

"Possibly," replied Lazarus, standing back to survey the repairs, "you are correct. It might — it may — be done in five."

CHAPTER VII.

MALACHI the Pharisee came home in a rage. Something had gone wrong in Jerusalem, and sorely displeased a man not accustomed to conceal his displeasure. Hagaar, his wife, and Ariella, his daughter, perceived at first glance that the domestic prospect was stormy, and made ready to weather it, each in her own way. Hagaar armed her tongue, but Ariella shrank upon her bed and held her peace.

Malachi's anger was of the most vicious kind, — the ecclesiastical. He had come straight from a service at the Carpenter's Synagogue, where a tumultuous scene had taken place. Malachi related the circumstances to his family with boiling anger. The women could not remember when they had seen the head of their house in such a fury.

"I have been insulted!" cried Malachi, — "I and my house, and the sect which we do honor by our adherence. We have been insulted past forgiveness, and I, for my part, will never forgive the man! Let him look to it!"

"It is shocking," said Hagaar. "But I could be angrier if I knew for what cause."

“A woman knows enough,” retorted Malachi, “when she is told that her husband has received an affront. It is not at all necessary that she should comprehend the matter, to be angered in his behalf, as becometh a wife.”

“But I could be so much *more* angry,” persisted Hagaar, “if I understood why.”

Thus entreated, Malachi sat down very hard upon the nearest rug, crossed his big feet beneath him, and resentfully narrated in his own way the following story, which we may translate in ours.

It seemed that he had been upon his way to the synagogue to hear the new Rabbi discourse, when the call struck to evening prayer. Malachi, being a religious braggart, and fond of advertising his pious superiority to more modest or more reverent men, stopped short where he was, and pompously began to pray aloud in the street. Now, he stood upon one of Jerusalem’s highways, known as the Street of the Goldsmiths, a busy, bustling place, where his devotions were sure to be seen of all men. Malachi, a coarse, self-important figure, blustering under his broad phylactery, lifted up his swarthy hands to heaven, and besought the divine aid as a man might hail a water-carrier, or summon a litter upon the highway. As he stood in this preposterous position, praying aloud sonorously, and

eyed by the crowding people with distrust or disfavor, a piercing glance fell upon him. Malachi felt as he would beneath a burning-glass. His soul shrank under the look, but he would not look up to see whence it came, only prayed on the more defiantly.

At this moment an elderly woman of his acquaintance humbly attracted his attention. The poor creature was feeble, and looked half starved. She pushed her way among the people, and knelt before the big Pharisee, touching the hem of his robe with her aged hand.

"The rent!" she wailed, "the rent! I beg for mercy from the payment of my rent. Thy collector has referred me to thyself. I have naught wherewith to pay, and I crave grace for the rent till I may find the means of labor whereby to earn the sum. No man desires the service of so *old* a woman. I have no money, and my husband and my son are dead before me. I pray for mercy from thee, as thou prayest mercy from Jehovah. Remit my rent! Remit my rent in the holy name of prayer!"

"Woman!" said Malachi coldly, "see you not that you interrupt my devotions? Settle the matter with my collector. Depart, and leave me with my God."

The crowd raised a jeering laugh; the old woman bowed herself together, and shrank

away. Malachi closed his eyes and prayed on vociferously.

When he opened them, he perceived quite near him the stately form of the Rabbi, climbing the hill to the synagogue. The Nazarene did not look at the Pharisee again; he walked on silently; but his very step seemed to express a strong scorn; his white mantle blew backward in the wind, revealing the outline of his long limbs, the muscular limbs of a daily walker; his face was invisible; his hand fell closely shut together at his side, — clenched, we might say of another man's hand; that did not seem the word to apply to his, whose every gesture indicated a self-restraint too great to be visible in excessive expression.

Malachi was dull enough; but he stopped praying aloud; he felt that he had said enough. He watched the Nazarene uncomfortably, till the silent figure had mounted the hill and disappeared within the synagogue. Malachi lingered a moment to recover his composure, and then entered, and passed pompously to his accustomed and prominent seat.

“And then,” cried Malachi to his women, — “and then what does the fellow do? Of what does the Rabbi discourse? What follows? An attack upon us! An attack upon the sect of the Pharisees! A violent tirade! A scanda-

lous, outrageous, unpardonable insult! Verily the man did open his lips and curse us on the spot!"

"Oh, not *curse* you, father!" pleaded Ariella. "I cannot think this Rabbi is a man to curse. His name has not such savor among those who know him well."

"Judge for yourself, then, you prating fool!" cried Malachi. "These words he said: '*Woe unto you! Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!*'"

"People don't curse without a reason," said Hagar sharply. "The preacher must have had one to offer for such language. Out with it, Malachi! Thou dost not verily tell the whole story, — that I perceive right well. What else did the Rabbi say?"

"*Woe unto you! Woe unto you who do for a pretence devour widows' houses,*" exploded Malachi furiously, "*and who do make long prayers in the streets to be seen of men.*"

"And that is not the worst of it!" he cried, smiting the knuckles of one coarse hand into the palm of the other. "He did heap insult upon insult in my presence. '*Without, ye are whited sepulchres,*' said he, '*but within are dead men's bones. Within, ye are all uncleanness.*' . . . Thus said the Nazarene. A furor followed. The synagogue was in an uproar. I

raised a cry of 'Catch him! Stay the fellow! Hold him!' and many answered to my command, and set upon him. He escaped us," added Malachi savagely. "He fled from us."

"How could that be?" asked Ariella gently. "You so many, and he but one? How *could* he escape ye?"

"I know not," answered Malachi hotly. "It is a matter beyond me. He melted from us like flying fire. When we clutched him, he was gone, — when we hindered him, he vanished. He ceased. He was not. It is a trick he has."

"It is clever in him, at all events," observed Hagar, none too soothingly.

"Silence, woman!" cried her furious lord, "and learn thou more wifely manners. From this hour I and my household do abjure the Nazarene. See to it, Hagar! See to it, Ariella! Follow him not. Receive him not. Put the width of his insult and my displeasure between Jesus of Nazareth and the house of Malachi the Pharisee, and bridge it not, from this time forth, forever!"

"Why, I am sure I have no objections," said Hagar. "*I* care nothing for the Rabbi. And I am sure it is a great deal of trouble for one to get up early and go into Jerusalem to hear a preacher who is n't there."

But Ariella said nothing. She sighed sadly.

Only yesterday Baruch had sent her word by Rachel, his mother, that he was about to go into Jerusalem, attended by a neighbor's lad, to plead with Jesus the Healer in behalf of his sick neighbor.

It was not long after this, perhaps not a matter of two days, that Ariella received through her mother the announcement of the presence of Baruch.

"He waits without," said Hagar carelessly, "and seems more anxious than usual to see you. He may as well come into the court. It is nobody but blind Baruch." Ariella assented cordially. It was some time since she had seen Baruch. They had exchanged no words together undisturbed by others since that pleasant morning on which the family had journeyed to Jerusalem, to hear the Rabbi whose manly and fearless attack upon the unworthy element of his sect had but now so enraged Malachi.

Ushered by Hagar, Baruch came into the court, and seated himself upon the low ottoman placed for visitors beside the couch of Ariella.

He and Ariella exchanged salutations quietly ; but Ariella perceived at once that Baruch was keenly excited upon some matter of which it did not suit him to chatter, and which he was not even willing to introduce hastily. The mother of Ariella sat beside these two afflicted young

people for a while, gossiping of neighborhood trifles. Ariella observed with surprise that Hagar did not repeat to their visitor the incident in the synagogue so vociferously related by Malachi. The simplest of women grow shrewd at the most unexpected crises. Hagar may have felt in the rising storm of public feeling which was beginning to mutter through Judea, and of which the Nazarene was the pathetic object, a certain restraint or warning; if this did not take in Hagar's mind the character of a religious or political claim, at least it presented itself to her as a motive why a woman should hold her tongue, and not anger a prominent husband. Hagar departed presently upon domestic errands of superior interest to these ecclesiastical and masculine conflicts; and, passing in and out of the court, as the occasion took her, left the young people a little time to themselves. Baruch took advantage of this fact to say: —

“Ariella, I have seen him. I have spoken with him.”

“And of what didst thou speak?” asked Ariella.

“Canst thou ask me? Of thyself, Ariella.”

“Thou takest a great deal of trouble,” sighed Ariella thoughtfully, “for me.”

The fine countenance of the blind man turned

toward her as if he saw her; he did not immediately speak, yet the silence said more than all the words in the Law. The sick girl delicately blushed, as if a little ashamed of herself, — as if she had parried or played with a man who was above the slightest evasion of lip, as perhaps she had. It is a weakness into which invalids fall sometimes, from excessive effort to appear modest or unselfish.

“Take it, then, Baruch,” she murmured humbly. “Take it, and God bless thee for it, and make me worthy of it! What didst thou say of me and my poor life to the Nazarene? And how found’st thou him? What happened? How seemed he to thee? What manner of man is he?”

“Like unto no other,” answered Baruch solemnly — “like unto no other man who treadeth the earth. He hath the touch of a spirit, and the voice of one of the Sons of God.”

“Did he touch thee?” asked Ariella, with increasing reverence.

“For a moment he did. He laid his hand upon the sleeve of my robe. Verily, I did feel the pressure of his finger-tip upon the garment’s edge, like the grasp of a Power, as if an angel had uplifted me. I bowed myself before him, and hid my face, and poured my soul out to him in thy behalf. He was walking in a dusty

street, among a press of people. The throng was great. They urged me, and trampled on me, and he did rebuke them in a voice the like unto which I have not heard, for the music of it, and the authority. ‘Stand back,’ he cried, ‘stand ye back, and give room to affliction, which is more sacred than health.’ Then they did stand back and gave space to me, and I did speak with him apart.”

“Would that I could have heard thee!” fervently said Ariella.

“Would that thou couldst hear *him*!” cried Baruch. “And that thou shalt! That thou shalt! He will come to thee. He will come to Bethany and heal thee, Ariella. So said he unto me.”

Ariella turned very pale, and sank back upon her pillows. For some moments she did not speak to Baruch, whom at length, with slow self-restraint, she answered:—

“Didst thou ask *that* of him—to journey hither—for a stranger, a poor sick girl whom nobody knows? How darest thou, Baruch?”

“For thy sake, Ariella,” said Baruch quietly, “I would dare ask Jehovah himself.”

“But he cannot heal me!” murmured Ariella.

“While I did plead thy case with him,” said Baruch quietly, “there came unto us a slave,

formerly from the palace of Herod. He had been set by the king to wait upon an officer of his guard, an evil fellow, who had turned leprous, and was put without the gates. The disease turned upon the slave, and did befoul him, and make him abhorred of God and men. Men said so sore a sight had not been seen in Jerusalem for years. The lad who guided me would have snatched me away; but I remained, for I feared naught, and I heard the outcast cry, 'Unclean! unclean!' and aught sadder than the sound of his voice, the ear of a blind man never heard. Verily, it made my soul sick within me. . . . Ariella!" said Baruch, suddenly changing his tone to one of deep rebuke, "while I stood upon the spot, the leper was made whole. And all the people did testify to the deed, with hoshannas that shook the earth and air."

"Incredible!" whispered Ariella. She was much moved, and it needed not eyes to perceive this, for her agitated breath came panting through her patient lips.

"He will come to thee," persisted Baruch joyfully, "for I said: 'Master, I have a dear friend, a little woman, who for many years doth not leave her bed, else I would bring her to thee. If thou couldst touch her, she would arise and walk.'"

"What answer made he?" asked Ariella eagerly.

“It concerneth thee not,” said Baruch evasively. “It is enough that he cometh.”

“But I will have his answer!”

“But that thou shalt not!”

“Then will I not see him. Then will I not be healed! Then will I stay upon my couch and be as I am!”

“Thou art a silken tyrant,” said Baruch, smiling indulgently. “Thou doest thine own will with me. Since thou wilt, then, these were his words: ‘Baruch,’ he said, ‘Baruch, *Blessed*’” —

“How knew he thy name?” interrupted Ariella.

“That know I no more than thyself. No man did tell him, for I knew no man. I go too seldom abroad to be known in Jerusalem. ‘Baruch,’ he said, ‘hast thou naught to ask me for thyself?’ And I said, ‘Lord, I have naught;’ and he did repeat, ‘*Blessed of God* be thou!’ and said no more to me, save that he bade me tell thee he would come to *thee*, Ariella. He cometh upon the first day of the week. . . . Thou shalt be healed, Ariella! Thou shalt arise and walk!”

The countenance of the blind man expressed at that moment a joy so exquisite, a self-forgetfulness so supreme, that Ariella quailed before it.

“ Oh, Baruch ! ” she sobbed, “ great is thy faith, and greater is thy soul. I am not worthy to be called thy friend. But . . . Oh, Baruch, how do I tell thee ? Thine errand hath been all in vain. My father hath been offended with this Jesus, and hath forbidden me to have dealings with him. The Nazarene may not so much as cross this threshold. Malachi hath said it.”

“ Oh, what shall we do ? ” moaned Baruch. His disappointment was something hard to see. He hid his face and groaned.

“ Be comforted,” said Ariella tenderly. “ Art not thou, too, afflicted ? Can I not bear my lot as thou dost thine ? God gave them both.”

“ And God gave this prophet ! ” cried Baruch, starting passionately to his feet. “ And by the faith of our fathers, he and thou shalt meet, in spite of men and devils ! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE last day's work at the palace had come. To the master-builder it seemed like the last day of the world. He arose like a doomed man, and trod the familiar path over the mountain with laggard feet. His head drooped. His eyes were on the ground. The glory of the dawn unfolded about him like a huge flower; petals of rose-lipped clouds lapped the outlines of the hills, and turned back against a horizon of pure fire; now and then one broke off and floated as if it had been blown away from a calyx.

Lazarus did not see the gorgeous spectacle. He felt it, as one feels the blazonry of a festival when one is bitterly bereaved. Certain words occurred to him from the sacred writings of his people; he repeated them dreamily, missing the exact quotation; it was something about the rising sun: "Who goeth forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber . . . who rejoiceth as a man strong to run a race." For the first time in all his simple, healthy life, Lazarus recoiled from the sunrise. The sadness in the scenery of Judea, never before apparent to him, crept into

his heart. Abroad he would not look. With downcast eyes he saw the heavy dew roll from the edges to the tips of the grass-blades at his feet; a white lily gone astray from a garden — a cultivated Persian lily, not common to the region — nodded over the path, and, heavy and wet, hung languorously; another lily, wild and scarlet, grew beside her: deep in their cups, perfume and dew, night and sleep, and slow waking, and the power of the stirring sun struggled together.

“It is a fair flower,” said Lazarus aloud. The busy young Jew was not accustomed to notice the flowers; he had never given them morning thoughts, unless, perhaps, when Mary said sometimes, “The lilies are abloom, my brother.”

Now he stooped and gathered those two, the lily of scarlet and the lily of white. He could not remember when he had picked a flower. These felt as strange as the heads of children beneath his touch. He held them delicately as he walked on. He looked into their soft hearts. He turned them from one hand to another with care so as not to spill the dew therefrom. He studied the flowers with a perfectly new interest.

“It is like a lady,” thought Lazarus.

“This one,” he said, after some reflection, “this one is the daughter of a High priest. She liveth in a palace.”

He held the scarlet lily above the level of his eyes, suddenly lifted them, threw his head back with that pleasant motion peculiar to Lazarus, and looked at the flower.

“This one, *this* is Zahara.”

His face turned fervent and pale; he drew the flower down to his lips and ardently drank the dew from its blazing heart. Then he stood for a moment, uncertain, dissatisfied. He turned the white lily about in his hesitating hand.

“I am wrong,” said Lazarus, with a faint smile. “It must be *this* is Zahara.”

Reverently and slowly he touched the white flower to his lips: her dew trembled upon them; he tasted it delicately. Then he put both lilies together in one hand and held them there. He shook his head with perplexity. Which *was* Zahara? This was the most imaginative moment of Lazarus’ life. But imagination was a strange guest to him. He knew not how to treat her. Yet he kept the lilies and held them, and regarded them with tenderness as he walked on with quivering step to the palace.

The sun had now arisen, and the full day was abroad. Lazarus lifted his head, and eyed the world again like a man. Sounds of stirring life filled the air, and the early risers of Judea were already at their day’s toil. The ear of the skilled workman responded to the throb of duty.

His eye heightened. He looked upon the stately outline of Jerusalem ; upon the Temple, leaning like one of the Sons of God against the fiery eastern sky ; upon the fair valley, where the hum of business began ; yonder toward the bridge of the great Bazaars owned by Annas and Caiaphas. The Bazaars themselves were out of sight from the point where Lazarus stood upon Mount Olivet ; but their locality was indicated by a pretty sight.

Flocks of doves hovered and hung overhead, swaying in the bright air. These were the doves fed and " homed " at that place, and kept for sale for the purification-offering of young mothers. Lazarus looked at the doves thoughtfully. They quivered in the distance like thoughts that are too vague to be captured. His gaze wandered back to the palace, now looming ahead of him, near, splendid, and haughty. The hand of Lazarus still held the lilies. As he approached the palace gates he kept repeating to himself,

" It is my last day. It is the last day of Zahara."

Lazarus was now madly in love with Zahara. It seemed to him impossible that by another sunrise he should be beyond the possibility of a chance of beholding her. He felt utterly bewildered. He had now begun to have a pre-

science of what it was going to cost him to be parted from her, but it was a dull foreknowledge ; Lazarus did not belong either to the age or to the race of introspective lovers, and his experience overtook him, not he it.

Since the last meeting with Zahara, which we have recorded, Lazarus had beheld her but once. Then she suffered him to speak with her for as many moments as she might, undisturbed of her women. Lazarus found in that benignant favor great comfort, if no hope. It could not be denied that Zahara pleased herself with Lazarus. Lazarus was too single-minded to reflect that she was perhaps amusing herself. He drank her presence as the parched side of Lebanon drank the scanty rills from its heights, and beyond his thirst and her refreshing knew not the uses of thought.

But upon the occasion to which we refer, Zahara had succeeded in troubling the soul of Lazarus upon other grounds than the bestowal or the withdrawal of her bright and precious presence. Zahara had said, with considerable promptness, as she stood playing with the tassel of the silken curtain, which partly hid her from the young builder's reverent gaze, — she, just ready to dart within or proudly step without, to flee from him, or face him, according to the nature of the next interruption which might befall

this stolen interview ; he, eager, ardent, at worship, entranced, standing like one of his own beautiful pillars firmly before her, — Zahara had said : —

“ I think the less of your judgment, Lazarus, for the matter I heard you relate to my father, the other day. I thought you were a sensible man. How can you meddle with such low-lived affairs ? ”

“ Explain thyself, Zahara,” said Lazarus faintly. But he knew perfectly well what she meant.

“ Why, this fellow, — this Jesus,” pouted Zahara. “ He is no companion for you.”

“ He is not my companion,” returned Lazarus, lifting his head. “ He is my master.”

“ That is worse yet,” retorted Zahara. “ You cannot expect a princess to approve of such a person.”

“ I expect nothing, Zahara,” said Lazarus manfully, looking straight at her. “ But my duty is my own ; and my manner of following it must be mine also.”

Zahara returned his look proudly. In her heart she thought the more of this young man for his sturdy speech ; but it was not in her nature easily to say so.

“ It seems to me,” said Zahara, playing with the bangles on the gemmed bracelet that clasped

her upper arm, "that this is a very plebeian religion you are interested in."

"The religion of our fathers is the religion of the prophets," answered Lazarus, with less assurance. "It is surely a respectable one, Zahara."

"You do not mean that you think this fellow Him of whom the prophets testified? You have not gone astray with *that* madness?" Zahara's young lip curled.

"If Jesus of Nazareth be the Messiah," said Lazarus evasively, "I should be sorry to be numbered among those who are ranged against him."

"But come! think you he *is* the Messiah?" persisted Zahara. "There are so many of them! They come up like weeds, every day or two."

She spoke with a pretty, feminine gesture, a slighting motion, as if the whole subject were beneath a well-born observation. But her countenance expressed serious, almost earnest attention, an intellectual apprehension of the question not common to the women of her race and time. There seemed to be two Zaharas in the girl: one battled with the other, and one was quite superior to the other; but it was not the superior, by any means, who presumably conquered. She was not a simple Jewish maiden like the damsels whom Lazarus had known. She had will and purpose; she had, moreover, thoughts.

"Is this Jesus the Messiah?" repeated Zahara.

"How know I?" replied Lazarus. He looked at Zahara. His eyes overflowed with tenderness. He felt at the moment that he knew nothing in this world except that Zahara was. Her own bright gaze drooped before him. The breath of Lazarus came violently. Jesus of Nazareth was forgotten.

Lazarus reached the palace upon this last day of his service there with whirling brain. He still held the flowers in his hand, he could not have told wherefore. He found it difficult to give orders to his artists. His workmen muttered among themselves that the master's wits were gone star-gazing. But Lazarus put the lilies away in the shade of a pillar, in a cool spot. There was a little jug of water, left by one of the men, and Lazarus placed the stems of the flowers in the water. He had no definite idea in doing this, except that the lilies were precious, being like Zahara, and should be cared for. In the course of the morning one of his men upset the jug accidentally, and mopped up the water from the marble floor with an old piece of linen. The flowers he threw away. Awhile after, Lazarus asked:—

"Jacob, where are the flowers of red and of white, left under yonder pillar?"

“Over the wall,” said Jacob carelessly.

Lazarus turned upon the man with a sharp rebuke, at which the fellow stared.

“Of what value were the weeds?” returned Jacob, with the contempt which the man feels for the master’s weaknesses, none the less, perhaps, because he dare not express it. Then Lazarus remembered in a dazed way that Jacob did not know that Zahara was a lily, and the lily was Zahara; and she was the lily of red, and the lily of white was she.

Lazarus in silence went without the wall, and found the lilies. They drooped in the scorching noon sun; he gathered them to his heart and protected them, and refilled the little jug and revived the flowers. They held up their heads, and seemed to look at him gratefully. They were not as haughty as they were before the accident had happened to them. They seemed to have become humbled and disciplined flowers.

The day wore on. Annas, the High priest, came out to regard the work. He approved of it, and praised it with well-bred reserve.

“I may wish further repairs undertaken in the interior,” observed Annas, “but they cannot be managed except the palace is vacated. I shall probably move to my country-seat at Capernaum for some weeks in the heat of the

season. You can easily work upon the building while my family are absent from it."

Lazarus bowed. He said neither yea nor nay. His heart beat violently. A cloud settled before his eyes. The palace — and Zahara not within it! To toil up there in the hot weather, and listen to the jabber of the workmen and the chip-chipping of their tools — and Zahara at Capernaum!

"By the God of my fathers," thought Lazarus, "Annas may look elsewhere for a master-builder. Of this job will I none."

But he was discreet enough not to say so. The work was not offered to him yet. He remained so silent that Annas regarded him with a slight frown, and moved haughtily away. Suddenly he turned back, and again approached the builder.

"By the way," said the High priest urbanely, "what has become of this Nazarene of whom I did converse with you on one occasion?"

"He is about his Father's business," replied Lazarus in a low tone. "He doeth the will of God, as he doth at all times."

The High priest smiled a chill, contemptuous smile. He stroked his impressive beard.

"You know him well, it seems, my young friend?"

"I have said it. Very well."

"You meet him often, I understand?" asked the priest. There was a slight flicker in his cold black eye. The two men watched each other warily.

"I have met him very often," said Lazarus quietly.

"But not of late?"

Lazarus hesitated. "No, not of late."

"And pray, may I inquire why?"

"I have been absorbed in business. I have been preoccupied. I have not found it possible to conduct the friendship you speak of as assiduously as I have done at former times, or," added Lazarus, "as I wish to do, and as I mean to do, when I am less engaged."

"How long," insisted the High priest, "is it since you have spoken with your *master*?"

He emphasized the last word with a sarcasm at which Lazarus colored.

"I am an unworthy disciple," said the young man quickly. "It is longer than it ought to be since I have spoken with him whom above all public men in Judea to-day I do respect."

Now, in fact, it was weeks since Lazarus had taken the trouble to see the Nazarene ; so many, that he was ashamed to count them in the presence of the most powerful enemy of the new Rabbi and the new faith known to Jewish religious circles. Lazarus felt that he was trying

to atone for his too evident neglect by a too apparent devotion of the lip. He felt ashamed, and he felt that Annas knew he felt ashamed: the slight, sharp smile with which the High priest moved away rankled in the soul of his master-builder.

"I will see Jesus," vowed Lazarus to himself. "I will see him before another sun has set."

At this moment he heard a low voice from behind the curtain of the women's antechambers, — a royal voice; it had purple in it, he thought, like the woven silk of the curtain; it said: —

"Lazarus?"

"Here am I," responded Lazarus eagerly.

But nothing further followed. Zahara did not present herself.

Presently he heard her calling to that little maiden she did favor.

"Rebecca? come thou and comfort me, Rebecca." Lazarus wished he were that little maiden.

Now it fell that the end of that day came and Zahara had not shown her face to Lazarus. He worked on drearily. He was sick at heart.

"Does she not know," he thought, "does she not remember? It is the last. I shall see her no more."

But Zahara was not to be seen.

Night came on. The sun dropped, and the cool of the evening gathered. The call to prayer sounded from the great Temple. The workmen laid down their tools. The drops stood upon the forehead of Lazarus. His voice grew thick and faint. He looked at his men with a kind of bewildered appeal.

"You seem to be tired out, or you are ill, master," said he whom they call Jacob, respectfully. "It is a good work. A man should rejoice in it." Jacob was especially attentive to Lazarus, for the sake of that sweet Mary who sat in the synagogue and prayed to God, and remembered no man.

"Yes," returned his master with an effort, "it is an honest work, and does us all credit. Go you to your homes and rest upon it. Or—stay. Call at the house of Simon the Leper, and make my wish known to Martha, my sister, that she spread a feast for ye, in honor of the completion of this our service at the palace of the High priest. Make yourselves merry, my men; but make your merriment without your master. Behold, I would remain alone and observe the work, and study it until the fall of dusk, that I may not overlook any defect or possible improvement upon it. Leave me, therefore, and go your ways."

The workmen having obeyed, Lazarus stood

alone upon the portico, and it was the hour of sunset. He could see the quivering cup of the deep sky above the court; the walls of the palace shut him in; he examined the carved pillars with blurring eye and trembling hand; the purple curtain behind him hung listlessly in the still air. Distant steps sounded through the palace, and then hushed.

"I must go," thought Lazarus. "I must depart. She cometh not."

He moved unsteadily across the portico, and hardly knowing what he did, and not in the least knowing why, he stooped and took the two flowers, the scarlet lily and the white, from their shelter in the little jug. As he stood turning them about in his hands, a low voice behind him murmured:—

"Lazarus? Not gone yet? Thou makest a long day's work of it."

"Zahara!"

He whirled and saw her, standing quite near, standing quite still. She was veiled. Her eyes regarded him merrily. She wore the robe of purple and of gold that he had noticed upon her when first he saw her. She shone through the twilight like a meteor caught to light the palace. She glittered with many little ornaments and trinkets such as the girl of the East loves. All the last rays of the departing day were im-

prisoned by her radiant figure. It seemed to Lazarus that the setting of the sun upon the world was but the symbol of the setting of this woman upon his life. He would have said somewhat to her, but his lips trembled and were dumb. He bowed his head low before her and placed the two lilies in her little hand.

The merriment faded out of Zahara's face. She drew herself together haughtily ; then, suddenly, for she looked long and steadfastly upon Lazarus, her queenly regard drooped before him. After a moment's hesitation she received the flowers with a courteous gesture, and modestly sheltered them in the folds of her robe. The womanliness, nay, what might almost be called the tenderness, of this action set Lazarus beside himself.

"Zahara!" he murmured, "thou art the lily of scarlet, for thou shinest like the living fire. And thou art the lily of white, for thou art as pure as the whitest cloud in heaven. I have drunk the dew from the scarlet flower, and I have touched the flower of white to my lips, — for thou art Zahara ; thou art the woman of flowers and the flower of women ; thou art fire and snow, and blossom and storm, Zahara ! — and I love thee."

The daughter of the High priest gave the builder one blinding look ; in it were reproach

and appeal, sorrow and tenderness, pride and terror, repulse and longing, — the whole nature of woman was in it. But Lazarus did not understand women. Zahara fled. That was all which Lazarus understood. Zahara fled from him as the shadow of the lily moves upon the grass beneath the rising wind. The embroidered curtain swayed and swung. Its purple folds came together with a soft sound like the meeting of delicate lips. Zahara, behind them, had vanished.

Lazarus stood for a few moments confused with anguish; then he bowed himself together, and gathered up the few tools left upon the portico and the little jug that had held the lilies, and staggered away. An officer of the palace spoke to him and bade him farewell politely. Lazarus answered, but knew not what. He went out blindly into the dark, and felt for the path that led away from the palace.

He did not find it, being so troubled and darkened in his mind, and groped about for a little upon the short, hot grass, on whose parched surface the dew was beginning to fall.

“Nay, then, Lazarus, I would have a word with thee,” said a soft voice at his very side. And lo, there, like a statue carved out of the tender night, still, dim and trembling, Zahara stood.

“Zahara! Thou wilt be blamed! What will be said to thee? That would kill me. Thou comest — alone — *thou — to me —* Zahara!”

“I go,” panted the girl, “I return. I do not stay. I but fled from my father’s palace — and no one did observe me; and it is dark; and I fly back to my father.”

“Thou shouldst never leave me!” cried Lazarus, “if my heart had its will. Thou shouldst shelter thyself within mine arms, and I would call thee mine for ever, for I love thee! I love thee!”

“*And I — thee,*” breathed Zahara faintly. With these incredible words, Zahara turned, towered like a princess, and fled, like a frightened deer, back to the palace. The darkness closed about her, and shut between herself and her lover as if it were a veil of scented gauze. Lazarus stood like a man struck dead with joy.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was nightfall at Bethany. In the house of Rachel the widow, and Baruch the blind man, excitement reigned. A great event had happened.

Without the porch, panting with weariness, upon a litter, lay a little maiden, pale and frail, but peaceful as no well maiden ever is. Ariella had been brought over to visit Rachel, her neighbor. She was to remain until the morrow. Malachi and Baruch, with the help of a slave, had borne the girl thither, and the same hands would return her before another sunset to her father's house. Malachi had grumbled over the job, which he held to be an unnecessary tax upon a man's time and attention, but Hagar had said: —

“Verily, thou wilt never put thyself to a better use. Give the girl her way.” For Baruch had dealt privately with Hagar, and urged the matter, taking no denial. And Hagar and Malachi had returned to their own dwelling; and Ariella lay upon the litter without the house of Rachel, begging not to be carried within, till

she must needs sleep ; for Ariella drank the air of heaven as an Arab dying of thirst in the desert drinks from the gourd held to his stiffening lips.

On the way from the house of her father to the home of Rachel, Ariella had suffered acutely ; every step of the bearers, jarring the litter, diffused agony through the poor girl's body ; but she had not said so. At every glimpse of the living world she had evinced the keenest delight. It was : —

“ Oh, father, the light ! The light of the sun on the fields ! How broad a thing is an afternoon ! ”

“ Baruch, I see a hill of tulips : they run up and down ; they are red, like torch-bearers at a race.”

“ Mother, give me thy hand. Lift my head a little that I may look toward Jerusalem. The Temple shineth like the rising of the day. In the Temple is the Ark. In the Ark God dwelleth. The people go up ; they go up like prayer into the heart of Jehovah ! Would that I could see the Temple ! The cheek of Olivet lifteth between.”

Ariella lay now upon her litter, herself as mute as an exhausted prayer ; the excitement of the day had sunk into its reaction, the thrill of joy had fallen into the grip of pain. The

invalid's hopeless consciousness of suffering returned like the fall of night. Ariella's face became pinched with anguish; the lines about her mouth deepened like those in the face of an old woman, — she was but twenty-five.

“Leave me to myself,” she panted. “Leave me, Rachel. Leave me, Baruch. Weariness overcometh me, for the exertion hath been great. Do not watch me, — nay, I shall the better endure alone.”

“But Baruch cannot see thee,” protested matter-of-fact Rachel.

“Baruch watcheth the closer, for that,” murmured Ariella. Baruch's sensitive face flushed; he rose without a word and left their guest. Rachel soon followed him, as the sick girl bade her. And Ariella had her will — sometimes the only one left to the sick: she was alone with her agony.

The litter had been set down in a cool, wide space in front of the house of Rachel. “In something green,” Ariella had begged, but it was too late in the season to find the parched grass green. Behind her the low house looked quiet and home-like; and the faint glimmer of Rachel's single candle shone upon the paved court and dull white sand. Baruch stood in the doorway, a silent, waiting figure. He seemed like a man who expected something, and was

patient and impatient by turns. Without, the darkening country looked to the imprisoned girl as wide as all heaven. Between the spasms of her pain she regarded it eagerly.

Eastward of her, the road to Jericho, rough, wild, dangerous, and ragged, wound over and among the hills. Ariella could almost mark the spot where her misfortune had befallen her nine years ago. A caravan was winding upward slowly, the outline of the camels rising and falling like the outlines of ships upon a restless sea. The caravan was coming towards Jerusalem. The travelers were singing; they sang the Psalms of Degrees. Beyond, the desert of Judea stretched far and frowning.

Turning her head, the sick girl looked about the little hamlet of Bethany. The Roman fortress rose, a grim, firm fact, against which every Jewish heart revolted. The houses of Ariella's people were built without the fortress line. Now and then the spear of a Roman soldier caught the dying light upon its tip.

Yonder, against the mountain-side, sepulchres showed, cut into the solid rock. These were owned by the wealthier families of Bethany. Ariella gazed upon their solemn outlines quietly.

"My life is a sepulchre," she said aloud.
"What doth it matter?"

A slight sound behind the head of Ariella's litter attracted, but did not arrest, her attention. She could not see, or she had not noticed, that the figure of the blind man had disappeared from the doorway. Baruch stood behind an olive-tree, and the olive-tree stood behind Ariella.

Now Ariella turned her head at this moment to look further downward to the southeast, where, far beyond her gaze, the sombre surface of the Dead Sea lay. One of the little freakish fancies of the sick possessed her. No person ever drowned in the Salt Dead Sea.

Oh, to be borne thither in her litter, and set afloat upon the strong water, and float her life out on that soft bed !

"It would never hurt one's back," thought Ariella. She laughed aloud at this conceit of hers, and tried to move upon her pillows, to raise herself upon one arm and look along the valley till sight should be lost in the purpling gloom. The effort caused her such pain that she uttered an involuntary groan.

Ariella seldom groaned. This was a downright cry of agony, and fell piteously enough from the poor girl's lips.

"Oh, Ariella !" cried Baruch, darting forward from behind the olive-tree. He stood before her ; he bent over her ; he trembled with sympa-

thy, — the tenderest that man or woman had ever shown for Ariella.

“Oh!” moaned Baruch, “could I only *see* how to comfort thee!”

“You *feel* how,” said Ariella, collecting herself at once.

“If love could comfort,” breathed Baruch, “if love could heal” —

“Love helps,” answered Ariella. “Love serves.”

“Men and women who are not afflicted of God, — who love as they will, and do as they would, — these are happy people, Ariella.”

“We are not as they,” said Ariella solemnly. Baruch stretched out his hand, and groped for hers. The sick girl laid her hand in that of the blind man. Both shook. Baruch bowed his face reverently above that poor little feverish hand. He did not touch it with his lips. He did not dare. After all, he was a man. If he had touched Ariella, he felt as if he should have gone mad with love and despair.

“Is this Baruch the blind man?” asked at that moment a wonderful voice. Baruch did not start or release the hand of Ariella. He held it like a man, and quietly made answer: —

“Yea, Lord, I am he.”

“And the maiden of whom thou didst speak with me, — do I behold her?”

"Thou beholdest her indeed."

"Knoweth she that I am come?"

"Nay, Lord, she knoweth not."

"Give space to me that I may stand beside her."

The voice which spoke was one of unquestionable authority. Ariella started under it. She looked up, frightened and panting, through the dark.

"Be calm, Ariella," said Baruch quietly. "He of whom I spoke to thee is here."

"You arranged this, Baruch? — you planned to bring me here — and told me not!" There was a touch of reproach in the girl's tone. She had fallen so thoroughly into Baruch's loving plot that her first sense of being deluded almost overpowered any other consciousness.

"What I have done, I have done," said Baruch firmly. "It becometh thee not to distrust me, Ariella. It is not in thy power to distrust *him*."

Baruch pointed at the commanding figure of their visitor, who, during this delay, had stood both silent and still. The three made a singular group: the blind man bent forward, eager, trembling, his whole body straining as if to see; the sick girl panting on the litter; and the solemn figure, mute as fate, before them.

It was now so dark that Ariella could not even see the familiar features of Baruch, bent so near

and turned so tenderly toward her. Of the stranger she could perceive absolutely nothing except the outline of a grand form ; the manliest, the most authoritative, she thought, that she had ever beheld. The face of the man was wrapped in the darkness of the summer night. Ariella struggled for a sight of it, but it was as dim before her as the will of God.

Rachel had now come out from the house, and finding the three fallen upon an utter silence, joined them herself without a word. She stood behind the olive-tree for a moment, unseen ; then she advanced, and knelt beside the litter, very near Ariella. Rachel quite understood what was going forward, for Baruch had confided in her ; and Rachel was one of those who trusted in the Nazarene.

He seemed almost as if he were indefinitely strengthened by the presence of this commonplace woman ; as if she had added faith or the material of power to the situation. He moved nearer to the litter, and broke the oppressive silence ; but it was only to ask a simple question . —

“ Is this the mother of the maiden ? ”

“ Yes, Lord,” replied Rachel. “ She is my guest, and the friend of my afflicted son. Baruch said that thou wouldst heal her.” Had it been a little less dark, they could have seen that the

Nazarene smiled slightly, as a man does who hears from children the prattle of knowledge already his own. But his smile was as invisible to these agitated people as the sun that had set behind Mount Olivet. The most powerful personality in Judea presented himself to these three souls only in the form of a voice.

But what a voice ! Ariella's nature rang with it. It was as strong as the winds. It was as sweet as love. It ran as deep as the sea. It commanded the heart as heaven commands the earth ; but it appealed to the sensibility as tenderly as if one's regard were a precious thing.

"*Ariella !*" said the Nazarene. He spoke as never man spake to the sick or to the well. Ariella felt herself drawn upward, soul and body, to the utterance of her name by those invisible lips. It was as if the very waves of ether, set in motion by his voice, encompassed her, as the waves of the sea encompass a sinking person who struggles upon them, if so be he may swim for his life. She felt herself lifted upon the sound ; it buoyed her ; she had a singular sensation, as if she began to float upon it.

"Yea, Lord," breathed Ariella. She upturned her face to him through the dark. Poor little wan, pinched face ! How feebly it moved ! Ariella was in terrible pain. The excitement and exertion of the day, culminating in this agi-

tating interview, had almost overborne her. Despite herself, a low moan came from her lips. At the sound, the blind man fell upon his knees beside his mother. Jesus and the sick girl remained, the two undisturbed actors in the touching scene. Low, sweet, serene, and commanding came the accents of the Nazarene. Ariella perceived that he did inquire of her concerning her faith in God his Father, and in himself, the Heavenly Father's Son; in his sympathy with human misery, and his power to heal the diseases of men; and he spoke to her, also, of his relation to her own peculiar suffering. He said these things in words so few that Ariella knew not how it was he said them; but she was aware of these thoughts, and of his desire to understand her own state of feeling toward himself. Above all else, she was aware of the searching, scorching necessity that she should speak the very truth, albeit that should sound discourteous or distrustful toward the Stranger, who, overworn and overworked, had traveled to Bethany, at the end of the hot day's toil, to serve an unknown sick girl, if he might or could. It even occurred to Ariella that he was not sure that he *could* heal her, and that his effort was worth something more for this very reason.

"Lord," said Ariella, "how can any heal me? I have been sick so long!"

The Nazarene made no answer. He had advanced, and now stood close beside the litter; he stretched his hand out, and motioned to Ariella through the dark that she put hers within it.

"Nine years," said Ariella, "I have lain upon my bed, — for nine whole years. I suffer very much. It is great pain. People do not know about pain. It tires them to understand it. I try not to trouble people; but I am not a patient girl. I get worn out sometimes, Lord, I am so tired, — tired out!" Ariella began to sob quietly.

"Lord, my faith has grown sick, like all the rest of me! How *can* I be healed?"

"Lord," said the blind man, still upon his knees, "*my* faith in thee is whole: it is sound enough to give life to the maiden though she did lie in the tomb."

"Baruch! *Baruch!*" cried Ariella. The blind man was distressed. He thought she should have cried, "Lord! Lord!" But Jesus only smiled thereat, in the darkness, no one being able to see the smile.

"Ariella," said Baruch, "give to him that asketh thee the touch of thy hand and the power of thy trust."

Ariella obeyed without a word. The cool, strong grasp of the Nazarene closed over her

hot little fingers. Immediately there came to Ariella the sensation of floating of which she had thought before. Her fancy about the Dead Sea recurred to her. But upon the enfeebled girl there fell the consciousness of one who is buoyed up on the sea of life. Forgotten vigor struck upon her body, and ran like fire through her veins.

The Nazarene, while he held her hand, had stood with head bowed low upon his breast, like a man sunken in thought or prayer too deep to admit of any lesser consciousness. Now he lifted his face, and solemnly spoke to her: —

“Maiden! I say unto thee, Arise! Behold, I say unto thee, Arise, and walk!”

A piteous cry fell from Ariella’s lips. Afterward she said that the pain which shot through her whole body was a thing too dreadful to speak of: the virulence of years of physical disorder seemed to be in it; it was as if her disease had a spirit, and a spite, and revenged itself by wrenching her as it yielded to the mysterious power of the Healer.

Baruch, at the sound of her anguish, sprang forward and would have caught her, but Jesus restrained him.

“Go into yonder door of the house,” said the Nazarene, “and behind it thou shalt find a tall jug standing upon the floor. Bring it hither to me.”

Ariella arose from her litter at these words. She stood upon her feet, and tottered.

“Go,” repeated the Nazarene. And Ariella went. She walked from the olive-tree toward the door of Rachel’s house, alone, unaided, and firmly. Rachel and Baruch stood breathless. They dared not follow her. Rachel could see her slight figure, wrapped in its little careless invalid dress, swaying before the faint light of Rachel’s candle, the solitary home-light. Ariella stooped and lifted the jug. It was a heavy jug, containing water. The sick girl lifted it upon her head, and came back across the dark space, walking steadily. The two observers watched her in silence. The third leaned his blind face forward touchingly. Baruch fancied that the breath of the Nazarene came a little quickly; but he was not sure. His own violently beating heart almost drowned his consciousness of every other fact.

Ariella returned. She walked up to the Nazarene with a firm step. She removed the jug from her head with one hand, and laid it at his feet.

Then, without a word, she herself dropped there; she fell upon her knees; she bowed her face; she laid her lips to the travel-stained feet of the Healer, and pressed them with awe to her cheek.

“Lord,” said Ariella, “Lord, forgive me. I am healed because of thee. Lord, I have been sick so long! . . . Teach me how to be well.”

Rachel was sobbing under the olive-tree. But Baruch fell upon his knees beside Ariella. He trembled with joy.

“Master!” he cried. He put out his blind hands, in the dark, and groped for Jesus. But the space which had held that figure of mercy and of command was empty. The Nazarene had vanished.

Ariella arose from her knees, and without a word walked into the house. She moved like a person intoxicated with joy. Rachel picked up the jug: she and Baruch followed Ariella, silent too.

The empty litter remained under the olive-tree.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Ariella and Rachel and Baruch reached the house together, that evening, a strange spirit fell upon them. The excitement of the tremendous event which had befallen Ariella took the form of an intense calm. Baruch hardly knew what he expected; more, and less, than he expected had come to pass. He strained his sensitive ears to hear the sound of Ariella's step upon his mother's floor. Wonderful sound! Ariella walked to and fro to try her feet; they sprang like birds or butterflies lightly hovering up and down; for some moments she flitted about, for sheer pleasure of flitting; but she did not say one word; then suddenly she sank upon a little white linen ottoman which stood against the wall, and gave a pretty yawn, like a child who is sleepy or tired, — a sound of pure health and physical comfort. When had any one heard a sound like that from this invalid's lips?

“Rachel,” said Ariella, “I am so sleepy! How strange a feeling! Dear Baruch, you cannot think how delightful it is! It runs through my body and my brain like the fall of dew. I

have no pain. What shall I do? How does one act who has no pain? I ought to speak; I should talk to you. I have nothing to say. What shall I do? Be patient with me. To wait for the ache to tire itself out, — that is the way to go to sleep. But there is no ache to wait for. How can this be! . . . It will return. It must be that it is coming back to me. I would sit awhile further and wait for it and battle with it, and say to it, Ah, you demon of the sick! I have escaped you for a little time — so long — one hour — two hours — I have defied you! Now we will have it out between us, you and I!”

But while Ariella spoke the words she threw one thin arm around her head, curled her face into her bend of the elbow, smiled more like a baby than a sick woman, and fell straightway into a deep sleep. It was a wonderful sleep. It lasted all that night; her even, healthy breathing was not interrupted by so much as a sigh; she slept on and on, as if death itself could never interfere with that blessed recuperation of the wasted nerve, and as if life loved her too well ever to trouble her by waking.

“Suppose she wake not?” asked Baruch, in the unreasonable terror of love. “What if she never wake, O my mother?”

“Let her be,” said the practical Rachel.

“The girl perisheth for sleep like this. I doubt me if she can remember what it is to rest like other human creatures. Mark thee, my son, the healing is not complete upon her yet. Without this sleep she might fall upon her old ways to-morrow. It takes more than two hours to heal a woman for nine years ridden upon her bed. Let her alone, Baruch. There are many that do profess to heal the sick. Time is their testimony, my son. I have seen many a broken heart in my day come from false healing.”

“There are pretenders, I know,” said Baruch. “I have heard of them.”

“And *I* have seen them,” whispered Rachel, with the caution of an elderly woman. “I have seen lame men throw away their staves by reason of faith in false gods and prophets; and I have seen them send to Jerusalem for new ones next week.”

“But he is not as they,” murmured Baruch, with the obstinacy of faith. Now Rachel quite agreed with Baruch concerning the genuineness of the healing quality reported of the Nazarene; but it pleased her to shake her head with the dignity of experience, and answer only: —

“At any rate, let the girl sleep; and do as much thyself.”

“I go without,” said Baruch, “and keep watch. Stay you with our guest, my mother, and guard her; for she is precious.”

Rachel looked after her son, as he departed from the room, and shook her head sadly.

“What can one do,” she thought, “with a blind son? He thinketh of the maiden like a man with eyes.”

But Rachel was sound asleep herself in ten minutes; and neither blind son nor invalid guest troubled her comfortable night. Only Baruch knew—and he only by stealing now and then to the doorway, and reverently listening to the slightest sound from within—only Baruch knew if Ariella slept the strange sleep of health, or ceased the long-familiar moan of suffering. Baruch watched till dawn; and when dawn came, he prayed.

Ariella awoke quietly. For some moments she lay still; the old expression of patience settled upon her features; she did not try to move. Rachel watched her intently; Baruch quivered without, a breathless listener.

“Rachel?” called Ariella. “Rachel, I have slept. It is good to be within your walls. Rest dwelleth here. I know not when I have slept such sleep. Wilt thou come hither and help me, dear Rachel, and bring water that I may bathe my face and cool my arms?”

“There is water in the inner room,” answered Rachel nonchalantly, “and fresh linen and conveniences suitable for a guest. Come in yonder with me, and I will show you them.”

Ariella stared at her hostess ; her large eyes widened with hurt surprise.

“Come !” repeated Rachel in a firm, motherly tone.

“Oh, I remember !” cried Ariella. “I remember it all. I have put my feet upon the ground. They have borne my weight. I have walked. The Nazarene commanded me, and I obeyed. I walked. But that was yesterday.”

“And this is to-day,” replied Rachel, in a comfortable tone. “Arise, Ariella. Arise and walk.”

Thus came to Ariella the two commands, — that of the divine spirit and that of common life ; and they took, as they must needs do to the sick, the same form, even the same language. Rachel performed no wonder ; she used her good sense ; which told her that many a wonder failed, — whether for lack of wonder-working power or of pluck to follow it up, she could not say, and did not care. The point was, that Ariella had walked. And walk she must. And verily, walk she did.

The girl arose at once. She tottered for a moment ; then struck out strongly into the middle of the room, and walked firmly into the adjoining apartment. The linen curtain swayed and fell, and hid her. Rachel could hear the little splash of the cool water with which her

young guest bathed. She did not offer to help her. She went without and told Baruch that Ariella was as well as other people.

As soon as the morning meal was over, Ariella started for her father's home. While yet the cool of the day was upon Bethany, the little journey would be more fairly made. Ariella was impatient for it. Baruch could not understand this; but he said nothing to delay her.

The girl came out in the morning, looking like a cloud, or a bud, or a dewdrop, or any lovely thing that is born of the young hour, and belongs to it.

Her eyes burned with excitement compared to which the fever of love is tame. The joy of the cured invalid has no similar upon this earth.

Ariella could not keep still. Her feet had wings. Her hair seemed electric with life, and floated about her on whims of its own. Waves of exquisite color ran over her pale face, as if learning their way to tint her cheek; then they would retreat suddenly, like strangers. Life came to her lips; they curved into childlike smiles. She nodded and laughed aloud at little things like a little girl. She ran to and fro. She called and sang. She was absorbed; she was intoxicated.

It was a hard thing to Baruch that she was in

such a hurry to get away. He would have been glad if she had stayed, or had even wanted to stay, beside them, his mother and himself, for that one day,—that first day of her delight. This well Ariella he did not understand. The old Ariella was gone. In her place what had he?

“Is it possible,” thought the blind man, “that I have lost her? What is this recovery? Does it cost me Ariella?”

He bowed his patient head. But to himself he said:—

“So be it, if so be that Ariella suffer not. I am content. I have had my will. She is healed.” Ariella did not understand the thought of Baruch. She meant to be very grateful and loving to him. But health and joy were too new to Ariella,—they dazzled her. She could see nothing else. To be sure, she said:—

“Baruch! Dear Baruch! I am well. I walk. I fly. I suffer nothing. Oh, Baruch, what do I owe thee!”

But Baruch answered nothing. He felt bereaved of Ariella.

She had insisted on going home alone, for some whim she had about it. But Rachel overruled her, and accompanied the maiden, who yielded carelessly. What difference did it make? What did anything matter? She could walk.

When she departed from the house, she took the hand of Baruch, and said some words to him, she knew not what. But the blind man turned away, and thought: —

“She hath forgotten me.”

Ariella trod the roads of Bethany like a spirit. Her feet did not seem to touch the ground. She walked on air. She held her head like a bird. She wished that she knew everybody she met, and could call out and say: —

“Behold me! I am Ariella. I am well. I walk.”

But Ariella knew few people; she had been a prisoner of the couch so long. She bounded along uninterrupted. Rachel puffed and labored, but could not keep up with her. It was perhaps half a mile to the house of Malachi. Now as chance had it, the first person known to Ariella, whom she met that wonderful morning, was a young man walking slowly, with his head bent and eyes upon the ground.

“What a handsome fellow!” thought the girl. When she came up to him she saw that it was a neighbor unseen of her for a long time, but well enough remembered. In fact it was Lazarus. He had a strange expression. His look was high and distant. His eyes were radiant and full. His face was quite pale. His talith was wet with dew and crumpled, as

though he had spent the night without upon the ground. The decorous citizen, the man of proprieties and customs, presented an unprecedented appearance.

Ariella was not veiled. She had, to tell the truth, forgotten all about it; veils, not being useful in the sick-room, were without her instincts, which were, therefore, natural. Lazarus turned upon Ariella the unseeing eye of him who has not slept the entire night. Rachel came panting up. Then Lazarus said slowly:—

“Why, Ariella! — Ariella?”

“It is indeed Ariella,” said Rachel. “Behold what wonder God hath wrought upon her.”

“I walk!” cried Ariella. “I fly; behold me. I am healed. I walk from the house of Rachel to the house of my father — I — Ariella!”

“What meaneth this?” demanded Lazarus, now aroused to the extraordinary nature of the scene.

“The Nazarene bade me,” answered Ariella more quietly than she had yet spoken that morning; “he commanded, and I do walk.”

The countenance of Lazarus expressed a battle of emotions as Rachel, in defiance of Jewish conventionality, — for such a thing as this did not happen every day, and the proprieties did, — paused, and related to their neighbor what had occurred. If Lazarus had ever cherished any

reserved opinions about the reported cures wrought by his friend and Master, — and it is not impossible, for the strongest of powers were tugging at the faith of the young man, — the sight of Ariella was confounding and convincing. Ariella he knew, and her piteous fate. What wonder was this? Ariella treading the streets of Bethany! What manner of man was he who wrought the deed?

Lazarus congratulated Ariella cordially, and hurried away from her. He could not talk about the matter; his brain seethed with the crowding impressions of the last twenty-four hours, — for this was the dawn of the day succeeding the confession of Zahara. Lazarus had spent the entire night wandering over Olivet, sleepless, staggering, drunken with rapture. On that solitary mountain-top now sacred to history, where the most devout man in Judea too often exhausted himself with nights of prayer and with the fervor of consecration to a lonely and terrible fate, his frailer friend, for love of a woman, kept a wild and fevered watch.

When Lazarus reached home that morning he learned that Jesus had spent the night in the house of Simon the Leper, that he had rested in the upper chamber, and had departed at dawn, before the morning meal, setting his face toward Jerusalem.

“And we could not even tell him where you were, Lazarus!” complained Martha coldly. “I was thoroughly ashamed of you.”

“But he asked no questions,” said Mary gently. “He scarcely made mention of thy name, my brother.” Lazarus bowed his head in silence; he felt helpless before his own nature. He had made vows enough. He did not say to Mary this time, “I will see the Nazarene as soon as possible.” He made haste to change the subject by reporting the wonder wrought on Ariella. But far from changing, this only seemed to accentuate, the great topic upon which in this, as in hundreds of Jewish families at that time, the force of daily interest powerfully centred.

“He that can put Ariella on her feet is a prophet, verily!” cried Martha. “She is more care to her mother than any girl in Bethany.” But Mary’s eyes shone peacefully. It was quite what she was prepared to believe. Why be so surprised about it? “Happy Ariella!” she whispered. Mary thought it might be worth nine years of misery, to be healed as Ariella was. Martha set forth at once to the house of Malachi to gossip about the news, and Lazarus retired to his own portion of the house. He tried to sleep. He was thoroughly uncomfortable. Two faces, like statues graven from his

heart, filled the silent, shaded room. Zahara's was the one ; but the other was the likeness of the Nazarene. The girl seemed to regard the Rabbi haughtily. But he looked with gentle dignity at Lazarus, and at the scowling beauty.

"I am torn in twain!" cried Lazarus.

Ariella reached home in wonderful time. No feet in Bethany trod that half mile so swiftly on that fair morning. Radiantly swaying, flying, flushed and beautiful, the girl who had gone forth borne upon the litter, moaning with pain, ran up the slope, and flashed into the door of her father's home.

Hagaar threw down the dish in which she was preparing leavened bread, and shrieked mightily.

"A spirit! A spirit! Malachi, come hither! Ariella is dead, and her spirit is running about the house!"

"I'll teach her better manners, then!" growled Malachi, who came lumbering in with his fists clenched. Malachi was one of the people who do not believe in ghosts, and are afraid of them accordingly.

Panting behind the girl came Rachel, and up the street Martha hurried as fast as the dignity of a wealthy widow permitted. Other neighbors had by this time learned the news, and a little crowd might be seen gathering, moving toward the house.

“I walk!” cried Ariella. “I run. The Nazarene commanded, and I fly. Kiss me, O my mother! Bless me, father, for I am like other girls.”

“Wouldst thou believe it?” demanded Rachel, with holy indignation, when she came home to tell the tale to Baruch. “What thinkest thou of such a father? Malachi swore a great oath, and vowed by Jehovah that the girl did make sport of them, and might have walked any day if she had wanted to.”

“Impossible!” cried the blind man.

“And more than that is possible,” continued Rachel, “for when he was forced to perceive that the wonder had come upon Ariella, he fell with a mighty rage. He let loose the vials of his wrath upon me for stealing his daughter — so he said — from her shelter in her father’s house; and upon thee for the trick, he called it, thou didst play upon him. ‘The impostor hath bewitched the girl!’ he shouted to the neighbors. ‘Go ye to your homes, disperse, and trouble an afflicted house no more. Leave us alone in our disgrace,’ said Malachi. But Hagar said” —

“What said the mother of the maiden?” asked Baruch, in the greatest distress.

“Hagar did go up to her husband and seize him as if he had been a rebellious little boy. Before all the neighbors, the wife of Malachi

the Pharisee did shake her husband to and fro. And she did clutch his beard and pulled upon it so he was fain to utter a yell of pain; and she took the courage of a man upon her woman's lips, and she did say, — and a noise she made in saying it, I testify, — ‘Malachi, all these years thou hast been lord unto me, and I have served thee as thine handmaid; but now thou shalt not lord me, for I am a woman, and the mother of the maiden, and I say, Look upon her! Look upon her! She is like other girls — poor Ariella — walking about! — and he that is her father, and does not bless God for the sight of her to-day, he deserveth to be crucified!’ And Martha, in a stately voice, cried, ‘Amen.’ And all the neighbors did say, ‘Amen.’ And Malachi was ashamed; but he was the more wroth insomuch as he *was* ashamed, and he turned him about, and cried aloud, ‘Ye shall see her on her couch again, ye people of Bethany, for all this pretender pretendeth! Look ye to it! Ye shall see if Ariella riseth and goeth about to-morrow!’ ”

“Oh, horrible!” cried Baruch. “What did she say?”

“Why, she said, ‘Shame on you, my husband!’ And” —

“What did *Ariella* say?” interrupted Baruch.

“Naught,” said Rachel, — “naught. She did

turn as pale as the dead, and quail before her father. And Hagaar, her mother, enveloped the girl in her arms, and shielded her, and all the people cried 'out upon Malachi."

"Poor lamb," moaned Baruch. "Poor quivering little lamb!"

"Well, if she be a lamb, Hagaar is a considerable sheep," said Rachel dryly. "Thou mayest trust the woman with her young, my son. Then is she a mighty power. As for Malachi, verily I believe he would rather tie the girl upon her bed than to permit the Nazarene to cure her."

Baruch replied with an inarticulate sound of distress.

"And Lazarus said " — continued Rachel.

"When sawest thou Lazarus?" demanded Baruch quickly.

Rachel related the details of the meeting between Lazarus and Ariella on the way to the house of Malachi.

The blind man turned away. His face fell, but his lips were silent. Lazarus could see.

And Ariella, in the excitement of the wild scene at home, had omitted to send any message back to Baruch by his mother. Baruch went away, and sat under the olive-tree, alone and patient.

CHAPTER XI.

THE relation of Lazarus to the Nazarene had been always peculiar. No other person among the friends of the Rabbi had a similar experience. The acquaintance of the two had begun on this wise.

Lazarus had a contract for some fine carving upon a portion of the Temple,—that always growing and never completed pride and glory of the Jews, upon which ten thousand men worked for over forty years, and in which there always remained the next touch possible to the patient artist of a beautiful thing.

Lazarus needed for his purpose some special carpentering of a high order of skill ; and, being a conscientious workman, sought for some time the hand required. There was finally recommended to him a young man, bearing the very common name of Jesus, a resident of a low, unpopular locality known as Nazareth. This person, it was said, exhibited a skill beyond his fellows, executing work of a fine degree. Lazarus found him, and set him to work in the Sacred Building. This might have been five or

six years before the time of our story. The young man performed his task with a skill and effect unknown to the experience of the builder with any common workman.

"Verily thy tools fly to do thy bidding," said the employer to the employee, one day, when he had stood silently watching the Nazarene for a long while. Jesus laid down the tool in his hand, and regarded the builder with a strange look. He replied that this might be possible. Lazarus, in amazement, inquired the meaning of these words. The young man made further answer to the effect that many things unknown and unwrought were possible, for which the times and the hearts of men were not ripe.

"I comprehend thee not," said Lazarus.

The carpenter was silent.

"But I do desire it," continued the builder. "I perceive that thou art a high-minded man, occupied with thoughts, not pleasure. Thou hast reflected more than I. I would hear this explained, if thou thinkest me worthy of thy confidence," added Lazarus, with the modesty of a truly delicate nature, capable of recognizing its superior in an inferior social position.

The young workman responded quietly to this tribute, which seemed neither to elate nor to surprise him.

"Thy touch is not the touch of a mechanic," said Lazarus uncomfortably. "Yet had I depended on thee to complete this service in the Temple" —

He felt embarrassed before his carpenter, as if he had given a servant's commission to a magian in disguise.

"Behold," said the Nazarene, quietly resuming his own work. "Now do I follow thee. The time cometh when thou shalt follow me."

While they were conversing on this wise, it chanced that Lazarus made an awkward slip with his hand against the tool, and it cut him heavily, entering the artery in the wrist. The blood flowed abundantly, and the injury had a serious look. The Nazarene uttered an exclamation of sympathy, and, clasping the wound in his own sensitive hand, held it firmly, and bowed his head over it, murmuring to himself gently as he did this.

"What sayest thou?" asked Lazarus uneasily.

But Jesus made him no reply.

"Unclasp thy hand from me, that I may seek some remedy or physician for my hurt," urged Lazarus, "for methinks it is a considerable one."

The young carpenter obeyed silently. And when he had unclasped his hand from the

wound, lo! it was healed beneath his touch. And he said to the wounded builder:—

“See thou tell no man. Speak not of these things; for the time is not ready for it.” The two young men looked each other solemnly in the eye.

“What art thou?” demanded Lazarus, paling. But Jesus made him no reply.

“*Who* art thou?” persisted Lazarus.

“Time will teach thee,” answered the other.

From this hour a friendship sprang between the two young men. It was closely felt rather than closely cultivated; for their ways led them apart. Lazarus remained true to the confidence of the Nazarene: he made mention of it to no person from that time forth; in fact, even between themselves, as is the way of reserved men, the wonder was never again discussed.

Lazarus regarded that incident in the Temple with a certain awe; but his mind never insisted on an explanation of the phenomenon. The Oriental accepts mystery naturally; Lazarus was not ignorant of the marvels of his country, but in anything of this nature he was totally inexperienced. He never forgot it. In later years, when the Nazarene grew into his tremendous popularity as a traveling Rabbi; when the wonders that he wrought were brought as a tale that is told almost every week to the ears of

Lazarus, that little scene in the Temple came back to him significantly. Probably it had prepared the prosperous, busy young Jew the more seriously to consider the awful claims of his friend when the time came that these were presented to Jewish society.

During the public career of the Nazarene, the two had met, but less often than had been expected. Both men were absorbingly busy, and in divergent ways. A strong tenderness, however, remained ripe between them. It had been the pleasure of Lazarus boldly to entertain Jesus at his house as often as possible; yet it was not very often. Lazarus had shown no pusillanimity in this matter. When the muttering began which menaced the usefulness, and was doomed to threaten the very life, of the young religious teacher; when Sanhedrim and Court, Priest and Pharisee, marked the most spiritual man in Judea with their dangerous displeasure, the rich and influential citizen remained loyal to his early affection for the poor itinerant. Lazarus had been hospitable and affectionate to Jesus. He called himself true. Up to this time he had been as attentive to his friend as circumstance permitted.

Now, to him as to thousands of live young natures, this had happened: the sea of love had overwhelmed him, and in it friendship was afloat or drowning, struggling for dear life.

The final evening at the palace instituted a duel of rapture and despair in the soul of Lazarus. At first, delight dominated. Zahara loved him. Heaven and earth could not change that. But when the next day wore on, and the next, and another, and the barricade of circumstances between himself and the High priest's daughter took on the full strength of common reality, Lazarus succumbed to his misery. The work was done. There was now no excuse for going to the palace; there was now no opportunity to go to the palace. There was, therefore, no Zahara.

What could the lover do? To advance like a man, and woo the maiden of her father, was impossible. The High priest gave no daughter to a carpenter. A suspicion of the truth would be fatal to everything. Annas was quite capable of sending his daughter on a visit to Egypt, Rome, or wherever, beyond the reach of an ineligible lover; for Zahara, his youngest and dearest, was now the only child left in the old priest's home. He might be capable of designs upon the lover, — who knew? Lazarus was a man of the world, of his little world at least, and he shrewdly estimated the character of Annas; a man at once attractive and repellent, good-natured and cold, frank and scheming, affectionate and relentless. If a love affair in his

household got beyond his indolent observation, nothing would be easier than for Annas to atone for a little negligence by extreme measures. In the state of society then existing in Judea, the power of a dignitary like Annas was uncontrolled and dangerous. What he did would not be questioned, and what he chose would be effected. The disposal of an objectionable person would be made as comfortable as possible for the disposer : methods would not matter. What would the disappearance of a builder signify ?

Lazarus fully realized his position. It seemed to be a hopeless one ; but youth and love are eager, and despair uncomfortable. Lazarus found in himself interludes of perfectly unreasonable hope.

During these he haunted the region of the palace, drawing as near as he dared without detection. He never saw her ; not once. He watched for her litter in the streets. He mingled with people, and listened to the gossip about the movements of her father. He neglected his business ; he eat little ; he slept less. One day, after a long tramp over the mountain and up to its top, whence he could look down upon the palace of the High priest, when Lazarus turned to go home it was nearly high noon, and he felt the vengeance of the sun upon his head. He grew blind and dizzy ; and looking abroad for

the familiar outline of the scenery in the valley, suddenly he could see nothing, and a faintness seized him.

“There floweth the brook Kidron,” thought Lazarus, “and yonder should be the palace, and there must be the house of Simon the Leper. I am not well. I have walked too far. I cannot distinguish objects. My head hath a singular sense of heat and pain. I must rest me, and shield me beneath the first spot of shade that I can reach. Verily, I am over-worn.”

Now with these thoughts half muttering upon his parched lips, the young man sank to the ground. The full power of the sun scorched his brain and body; and he became unconscious where he lay, a prone and helpless figure, face down, upon the hot side of Olivet.

There was a little garden near him, toward which Lazarus had been struggling. It was the property of a friend of his, a spot of rich foliage, thick and cool,—a pleasant, secluded place. It went by the name of Gethsemane.

Lazarus fainted just without the walls of this garden,—if we should call it a faint; his condition had too many causes, and was too serious to be lightly named. He remained unconscious for a long time.

When he came to himself, the grateful sense of shadow overhung him. The deadly sun was

quite shielded away from his burning head. Olive-trees folded their massive shelter, a green and graceful tent, above him ; the slender outline of the long leaves quivered on the edge of a bough against a fiery sky ; the gray tints of the under leaf added to the impression that the olive was a cool tree. A soft air played, like unseen fingers, upon these delicate leaves. The scents of richly cultivated fruits and flowers met in a pleasant, nondescript perfume, which was probably as intelligible to the stricken man as it would have been at any time ; for Lazarus had handled too many tools to be familiar with flowers. It was Zahara he cared for, not the lily. He turned his eyes idly about the familiar, gorgeous garden. He was quite alone. He recognized the spot immediately, and the fact that unknown hands had brought him thither.

But whose ? And where were they ?

“ Amos ? ” called Lazarus faintly, naming the name of his friend. There was no answer to the call, and Lazarus repeated it several times before the proprietor of the garden appeared. When he did so, he came leisurely through the fig-trees, walking with the comfortable step of a well-to-do man of agricultural temperament. He was a middle-aged, thoughtful Jew, a person of some social importance, and deeply in sympathy with the religious movement in which Lazarus had been of late a delinquent.

“Ah, there thou art,” said Amos. “I left thee to sleep it out. Thou hast had a bad time of it, Lazarus, and verily thou hast escaped a worse.”

“What aileth me?” demanded Lazarus feebly.

“A stroke of the sun, and nothing less,” said Amos shortly. “I wonder not. How camest thou on the top of Olivet at noon of a day like this?”

“I meant to get home,” murmured Lazarus. “I forgot myself.”

“Meant! Forgot!” cried Amos. “These are pretty words for a busy, sensible fellow. I know thee not, Lazarus, in these days; I understand thee not.”

“Nor I myself,” replied Lazarus faintly. He really felt too ill to be scolded. But Amos took the opportunity to hit his friend while he was down; it is a very old custom, as old as friendship.

“So it was thou that broughtest me hither,” said Lazarus. “I thank thee, Amos. In fact I think I was hard bestead. But how didst thou manage it? I am a heavy fellow.”

“In faith I did not manage it at all,” replied Amos. “It was not I, Lazarus, who brought thee here to Gethsemane.”

“Who then?” cried Lazarus, starting from the ground, and staring about the garden. “Where is he? Who is he?”

“He who took that burden upon himself hath departed from thee,” said Amos gravely. “He watched thee till the signs of consciousness appeared. He did watch thee, and minister to thee as man doth not minister to man except he loveth him. When thou didst move, and summon thy senses back to thy countenance, he arose and went his way. ‘I go,’ he said; ‘stay me not. I go before he waketh.’ But he commended thee to me and to my tenderness in words that would have wrung thy heart; and he did bless thee, Lazarus, and departed from thee.”

“Tell me his name,” demanded Lazarus. “Who did so serve me, and so depart from me?”

“I name thee no names,” replied the proprietor of Gethsemane severely. “Thou askest, verily, a flippant question, Lazarus, to my thinking. Who would he be? Who *must* he be? What man is he who climbeth Olivet,—not on fool’s business like thine own, but on awful errands with his God? Who seeketh this my garden and spendeth whole nights herein that he may pray here? What man is he who seeth a sufferer upon the wayside afar off, and succoreth him, and hath saved him before the eye of any other man hath so much as attended to his calamity? What man is he who beareth

with the coldness of a friend and forgiveth it unto him, and guardeth him, and shieldeth him, and overwhelmeth him with tenderness, and will not obtrude his presence to receive from obligation that which love did not offer? Is there more than one man in Judea builded after this manner, Lazarus?"

And Lazarus was silent before Amos. For he knew that there was no man but one who would have served him and saved him as he had been served and saved.

"When thou seest the Nazarene" — began Lazarus, with emotion.

"When *thou* seest him," interrupted Amos, "thou canst speak for thyself. In truth, it occurreth to me that between himself and thee no third man should intermeddle."

"Thou art right, Amos," said Lazarus reverently. "I shall soon have an opportunity of speaking with him."

"Love maketh its opportunities," replied Amos. So blindfold, so hand-bound, is friendship! This was the most unfortunate thing which Amos could have said. His words swung the mind of Lazarus hotly in the last direction in which, at that moment, it should have turned. Love — opportunity — Zahara! A mob of maddening images possessed the lover's fevered brain. He longed to get away alone, that he

might gloat upon them. The respectable Amos, the decorous garden, seemed phantoms of the sunstroke ; Jesus of Nazareth, a gentle apparition.

Only Zahara was too real to be thrust out of the sensibility of Lazarus by any interruption of feeling. Zahara dominated his being, a splendid force, as the sun of the East had smitten him to the earth.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was sunset at Capernaum. The lake was quite smooth. She carried a broad sheen of colors upon her quiet face, and looked more like a huge tinted sail spread to dry among the hills than the vixen sea she was. Capernaum was a thriving place, being on the highroad from Damascus to the South, and gay with travelers and summer residents. It was the favorite watering-place of Jerusalem, and the sun-smitten country round it was a picturesque place, with effective houses built of black and white stones, and a caressing scenery decorated and tapestried with myrtle, rock-rose, tamarisk, and acacia. In fact, Capernaum had many of those points appreciated by wealthy people in search of summer houses, and, when united to a lake-breeze, liberally paid for.

Upon the heights at the northwest end of the town stood one stately villa conspicuous for its elegance. The stones which composed it were of white and rose, outlined with black upon the façade: the architecture was inspiring if not imposing, the grounds extensive and liberally

cultivated, and the whole place had the unmistakable air of *un grand Seigneur*.

Walking in the fruit-garden at the cool of the day, like the Almighty after creation, an old man viewed his country-seat with elderly and opulent satisfaction. His venerable beard flowed to his breast. His important costume had a dignity of its own. His well-kept, not to say well-fed, hand fatly took on the gesture of benediction as he moved among his family and slaves. His comfortable eye wandered over the hills and the sea to return easily to the little horizon of his villa, which he regarded with the supreme complacency of wealth and position and ease from affairs. It was known in Jerusalem that the High priest was at home at his country-seat in Capernaum for a matter of some weeks.

Upon the Sea of Galilee, at that calm and alluring hour, a dainty, painted shallop, rowed by slaves and well filled with women, attracted much attention. Gennesaret was crowded with sails. She always was. But this sultry and silent evening had added the pleasure-seekers to the bread-seekers, the summer guests to the fishermen.

The little fleet was so great that boats became entangled at the landings and beaches, and had there been a breeze, skillful steering would have

been needed to avoid collision in sailing. But of breeze there was hardly enough to stir the pretty toys of the pleasure-people, or the clumsier wings of the fishing-boats. One floated, that evening, drifted, idled, dreamed, but did not expect to sail.

The lady, mistress of the gay shallop, — which, by the way, bore a purple sail, and was tied or trimmed with golden ropes, — sat among her maidens haughtily. She seemed dissatisfied and *distracte*.

“It is a dull place, this Capernaum,” she said. “Why did we come, Rebecca?”

“It will be livelier when the new wing is added to the villa,” replied Rebecca.

“That does not follow,” said Zahara indifferently. “Who buildeth the wing? My father hath omitted to mention to me. It should be decently done, at least, if we have to spend the winter here.”

But Rebecca did not know who should build the wing. She understood that he who did repair the palace at home had other engagements, and was not expected; but that the work should be begun at once by somebody, the damsel knew, for behold the tents of the workmen, erected yonder on the hill. They had arisen since the spring of to-day’s sun, said Rebecca.

“It does not matter,” said Zahara. She

looked idly at the little group of tents which Rebecca pointed out behind the villa of Annas. The shining water lay between. Zahara glanced across it, and then gazed into it. Her brilliant face had a subdued, gentle expression. Life seemed unimportant to the High priest's daughter. For the first time in her history, Zahara was sad.

"It is a stupid sea," said Zahara, "and what a stupid boat! One might as well go home and take a nap on a prayer-rug. Bid the fellows take the oars, for we shall drift all night. Get out the oars, and have me rowed across to the other shore. I desire to see a new ripple, if nothing more is possible, in this town where nothing happens."

At the moment when this order was given, and the rowers of the lady's boat took to their oars, and made a marked course away from the rest of the pleasure-fleet heading across the lake, a young man came out of one of the tents which Rebecca had pointed out to her mistress and walked rapidly down to the beach. His eyes were on the water, but no special interest in anything he saw appeared upon his countenance until by chance he overheard a bystander observe carelessly : —

"The daughter of Annas saileth to-night. Yonder is her shallop."

“Ah!” cried the young man, stopping short, “which one? Yes. I see. The sail is a sail of purple. Is that the lady’s shallop?”

“Verily, yes,” said the bystander; “she goeth to the opposite shore. She is rowed by the slaves of her father.”

The young man bowed and passed on. His eyes now sought the water as a king commandeth the world. His face had grown vivid and beautiful. His lips moved tenderly underneath his bright beard. His eyes melted. He breathed, but did not articulate the word:—

“Zahara!”

Now Annas was a cautious man, not accustomed to make known his purposes to the women of his household, and Rebecca was entirely ignorant of the fact that the master builder, Lazarus, had accepted the job upon the villa, and would himself oversee it, having quartered his men in tents upon the hillside, and taken lodgings for himself at the khan, or village inn.

Lazarus had done this with precipitation, almost without reflection. When the summons came from Annas, whose fancy had lightly forgotten the proposed repairs at the palace, and substituted others in his villa with the facile absorption of a man in his country-seat, the builder had responded with such promptness that the High priest took quick advantage of

the situation to beat him down to an easy price. Lazarus accepted it without protest, almost without consciousness that he, the first master-builder in the vicinity of Jerusalem, was underbidding the trade to the point of absurdity, one might almost say of indecency. What could it matter? Lazarus would have given Annas a villa to be at Capernaum just then.

On this evening, as he walked nervously up and down the strand, following the sail of Zahara, he observed a man stop and watch the same with something more than casual attention. The man was a fisherman. He cast the deep and always grave eye of his calling upon the sea. "I hope those fellows will not row the women too far," he said; "we are to have a change in the wind."

Then Lazarus perceived that he knew the man, and spoke to him.

"I salute you, Peter. Tell me. The lady yonder is not likely to get into any trouble, is she?"

"Lazarus, I salute you. Your face is a stranger of late to me. As to the lady, all I can say is, that these pleasure-boats are poor affairs. It is a singular thing to me that the richer a man is the more doth he tempt danger upon the face of the waters. Never yet did I know property to supply mariners' sense."

With these words Peter passed on, for he was a busy man. Peter was now at home for a few days, and had fish to get to market. But Lazarus had Zahara in a crazy little boat. The two men parted, as unconscious of each other's thoughts, almost as indifferent to them, as if they had been separate and divergent planets swinging in space, neither knowing that the time and the topic were to come upon which their natures would beat as one pulse, and that a throbbing artery.

Peter the fisherman had hardly turned the curve of the beach toward the town, when a light breeze tickled the surface of the lake, as fingers play with sensitive flesh. The water seemed to shrink and writhe a little playfully. Then a sound like a slight, protesting laugh whirled across from shore to shore. This was followed by a little shriek of rising wind. Then, in a moment, came whirl and darkness, foam and fury, uproar and confusion. One of the violent and dangerous squalls to which Gennesaret was subject had struck the lake. The peaceful tints of the water darkened into angry masses of color ; pearl and rose and gold became slate and black and iron.

Cries arose from the pleasure-boats. The clumsy sails of the age struggled in the tornado, and came down. People made for the shore as

fast as their senses permitted. These flaws from the gorges among the hills were greatly feared upon the shores of the lake, and there was little trifling with them. Cries of excitement or fear arose from the boats and from the beaches. One mad little boat capsized, but a couple of sturdy young Jews were the only passengers, and, being nearly ashore, they swam for it comfortably and attracted but little attention.

The wind had now beaten itself into a maniacal temper, and a vicious-looking storm-cloud swung over the sea and hung in mid-heaven. In the midst of the uproar the sun sank, and the sudden darkness of a hill country was added to the dismal scene.

Among the crowd upon the beach — a scurrying mass of incoherent men, these landing and those shouting, some pushing up the shore to get away, and others pushing down to it to see what was going on — one man stood in a kind of stupor, straining his eyes over the black belt of the water, where the foam was flying wildly. It was Lazarus. He was transfixed with agony. Zahara's boat had become invisible.

"A boat!" cried Lazarus, suddenly starting to his senses. "A boat to save a lady! A boat and boatmen! I pay a price for it!"

But the bystanders shook their heads, look-

ing dogged and sullen through the half-light. No man stirred. Lazarus ran down to the water and seized a skiff, and began to push it out. Half a dozen hands snatched it away from him.

“You get no boat and no boatmen from a Galilean fisherman in a blow like this,” said one of the men imperiously. “If you would kill yourself, which is contrary to the law, you get no help from us.”

At this moment an authoritative voice came crashing into the crowd.

“A boat! A boat! Fifty denarii for a boat and the rowers thereof!” It was the voice of the High priest. His venerable figure trembled with terror; his long beard blew in the wind; his face was convulsed. A Roman standing by said carelessly:—

“Some of his women are across the lake.”

Lazarus ran up to Annas, and poured forth wild words, a torrent of them, offering his services, himself, his body, soul,—all Lazarus to save Zahara.

“But wrench thou the boat from these craven fellows, and I will reach her, by the God of our Fathers! I save Zahara!”

Annas, in the naturalness of the awful moment, held out his hand and grasped the hand of the builder. The two men swayed together

on one great impulse. They ran down into the water, wading out. The High priest flung a handful of gold into the face of a fisherman, with a force that knocked the fellow flat; and, snatching his boat from him, hurled it into the water. Lazarus sprang in. Then the senses of the High priest returned to him.

"Are you familiar with seacraft?" he asked suddenly. "Can you row well?"

"No," answered the inland mechanic, "not well. But I have handled oars. I can get to her."

"She is safer without you," answered the High priest coldly. The storm was now a tempest. It bellowed at the two men, so that they could with difficulty hear each other's voices through the blast. The lake had become a curtain of cloud, and wind, and night. The High priest stood distractedly, calling certain slaves of his, and urging them into the boat.

"Ho, there! In with you! Row forth! Row yonder to your mistress, ye dogs!"

Lazarus, moved by one of the uncontrollable impulses that madden or inspire men, turned from the disheartening scene, and dashed off down the shore on his own responsibility. Scarcely knowing what he did, or why he did it, but urged by the longing to get as near as possible to the endangered boat, the young man

rushed along the edge of the lake on the leeward side of the storm, making mad haste, scrambling over rock and wreck, and beating onward blindly. Of course, if Zahara had crossed the lake, it was a hopeless undertaking to reach a sight of her. But suppose she had been blown out of her way, the boat might even be in sight, as soon as the clouds should lift; and the course which the lover's instinct took proved not so aimless as it seemed.

Lazarus made, in this reckless way, a long distance, — miles or leagues, for aught he knew; — he had lost all estimate of time or space. Whether it were midnight or morning, if he were in Capernaum or in Jerusalem, he knew not, when suddenly, to his blurred and blood-shot eyes, there appeared a vision of a little beaten boat, laboring heavily in the sea, and blown directly toward him, half a league out. Lazarus flung all his soul into his voice and called : —

“Zahara !”

But he might as well have summoned the shade of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, from the tomb, as Zahara from that raging expanse of night and sea.

He could see, or he seemed to see, the pretty purple sail of the toy boat, rent and ruined, flapping to the gale; the silly craft careened

like the shell of a dove's egg, and lo, while he stood helpless and shouting, and perishing of his anguish, the boat did overturn before his eyes, and human figures were spilled into the water like beetles. Then the storm burst with a roar, and he saw no more.

When Lazarus came to himself, it had lightened a little. A cleft in the mass of angry cloud showed a single star. He crawled to his feet, and waded out into the water madly, calling and pleading for Zahara. He waded out up to his neck, and tried to swim toward the wreck; but he was a poor swimmer, and the waves beat him back. He sank upon the sands, and tried nothing more. Despair took him. He no longer even wailed her name, but lay like a dead man, with his face upturned to the awful storm. Now, as he lay there, suddenly a singular silence fell upon the raving scene. The huge violence of wind which was over his head came to a stop, with a concussion. It was a tremendous concussion, like thunder; but thunder it was not, nor was it any sound with the like of which his ears were familiar. The storm simply ceased, as if at a military "Halt!" The cloud overhead lightened, brightened, and burst. Sky shone through. The water, still unconquered, leaped, like rebel forces, high to meet it. As the young man crawled to his knees, to watch

the turmoil of the sea, straining for a sight of the doomed boat, he perceived a remarkable thing.

Straight between the shore and the spot where the boat had overturned, a long narrow line of light and calm appeared, cut like a path between billows and foam. Upon this fair and shining water-way a majestic figure moved. It glided toward the shore, with light feet treading the water as a man treadeth the solid sand. The face of the man could not be seen ; but his mien was mighty. In his arms he bore a helpless human form — a woman's — dripping from the sea.

The heart of Lazarus beat as if it would strangle him. His breath came in gasps. He struggled to his feet ; then sank again, and fell upon his knees. In the outline and attitude of that commanding figure something familiar and pathetic seemed to appeal to him. It advanced solemnly. It spake no word. God was it, or man, or angel ?

It moved on majestically. It reached the shore. It stooped above the young man, and gently laid the woman at his feet.

Then Lazarus came to himself, and sprang and cried out mightily, and clutched after the two figures, — the woman's and his who carried her, — and his cry rang to the skies, and pierced

the shore of Galilee. But this was the order of the cry: —

“Zahara!”

“*Master!*”

And, whether God, or man, or angel, the vision answered not, but bent above the young man and the woman in the attitude of benediction, and departed from them in the thick foliage of the lake shore.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Lazarus had come forth from Gethsemane, the garden of Amos, his heart was sore and tender with remorse and with love. His feeling toward the Nazarene rose into ardent longing; and he made all haste at the first possible moment to meet the generous and forgiving friend, whose attitude toward himself was one of such nobility and fidelity. The opportunity did not arrive until the evening of the second day thereafter; then it was that the hour of evening prayer found Lazarus actively searching for Jesus in his usual haunts at Jerusalem. The search was unsuccessful. In the course of it, Lazarus happened to come upon John the fisherman, who informed him quietly, somewhat coldly, Lazarus thought, that his Master journeyed to Tiberias, whither he himself should follow, with other disciples of the Rabbi, upon the succeeding day. It did indeed occur to Lazarus that he might go to Tiberias himself; but at that precise time came the order from the High priest to improve the villa at Capernaum.

Lazarus responded to it without a moment's hesitation.

Thus again had fate, or that movement of our own to which we are apt to give the comfortable name of fate, interposed between the young man and the teacher whom he idealized and neglected, revered and grieved. Now, in this tremendous moment, in night and storm and wreck, and in the face of death, the two had met, and yet had met not. Lazarus had not even seen the countenance of his friend; it was so dark, and his own eyes so dimmed by those tears that come of seaward gazing and straining. He had only felt that benignant and wondrous presence, as one might feel the passing of an angel in the darkness. Jesus himself had not spoken an audible word. Lazarus fancied that his breath came quickly, either in agitation or from exhaustion; but he was so used to associating the Nazarene with the signs of power, achievement, and self-possession, that it was difficult for him to attribute these indications of effort and pathetic sensitiveness to that mysterious Personality.

At any rate, whether aggrieved or rebuking, whether in tenderness or in displeasure, the Nazarene had gone.

The first movement of Lazarus, it must be admitted, was toward Zahara. To discover whether

she still lived, — this instinct dominated everything. He caught her delicate, wet hand in his ; it dropped heavily at her side. He bent above her, reverently daring to put his ear upon her sacred breast ; her heart beat, — weakly, but steadily enough, like the heart of a strong girl whom shock and shipwreck do not easily kill.

“She lives!” murmured Lazarus. “She is saved. Zahara lives!”

Then, to his credit let us record it of him, before Lazarus made another effort in behalf of Zahara, he did make one to recall his friend.

“Master !” cried Lazarus. “Lord, return to me ! Return ! Stay with me but a moment, Rabboni, that I may worship thee, thou Hope of Israel !”

But the solemn movement of the oleanders against the dying wind was the only answer which the young man received. Jesus did not return.

The storm was now abated, as suddenly as it had arisen. The wind had sunk like a whipped hound. The waves were restless still ; but that pathway of light, upon which the mystical vision of the Nazarene had trodden, widened slowly, broadened solemnly, until it lay upon the lake like holy oil, and quelled the water. Whatever might be the fate of Zahara’s companions in the little pleasure-boat, Lazarus did not ask ; it must

be owned that he had forgotten to care. Zahara breathed. Zahara lay at his feet, a lovely, sobbing, living woman, coming to her senses with all sorts of pretty frights and signs of distress that drove every other consciousness from his nature.

It was night. It was solitude. It was Zahara. No hand could snatch her from him now. Neither law nor priest could rob him of that one hour. It was his own.

“Lazarus?” moaned Zahara, “am I drowned? Are we dead together, thou and I?”

“By the shade of Abraham! thou livest, and we are together,” cried Lazarus; “and which is the greater miracle I cannot tell thee, for I know not. . . . Tell me, Zahara, art thou hurt? Dost thou suffer pain? How can I comfort thee?”

“I am very wet,” said Zahara, “and it was terrible, and I suffer such fright as might kill a woman; but I will be stronger than my fright. I shall arise and get me to my father.”

She struggled to her feet and stood before the young man for an instant, full in the starlight. Her wet drapery clung to her from neck to ankles. Lazarus looked up at her from the sands where he knelt at her feet. His brain whirled. Beautiful creature! . . . He held up his arms to her. Zahara tottered.

“Help me, Lazarus,” she said faintly. “I

cannot walk alone. Help me homeward, for I would fain" —

What would Zahara fain have done? She never told him. Lazarus never asked. Still kneeling, he lifted his appealing arms; and Zahara, like a princess, stooped to them.

He caught her and drew her gently to him. She came right royally, — a strong surrender, womanly and wise. It was as if Zahara scorned to be coy, and to play with the love which was great enough to conquer her.

"Lazarus!" she murmured, "I am alive, and I love thee!"

"And we are alone, and I love thee! Come to me, Zahara, for I would shelter thee."

He gathered her to his arms, to his shoulder, to his breast, slowly, delicately; afraid, not of men or of angels, only of his own love and of the maiden's holy nature. The queenly girl crept to him as gently as the meekest woman of them all. Dark as it was, he closed his eyes instinctively, that he might for that supreme moment see nothing, not even the dim outline of her drooping face; that he might only feel the timid motion of her round arm as it stole around his neck, the approach of her velvet cheek to his own, her fragrant breath upon his beard, the delicate beating of her pure heart, the ecstasy of her surrendered lips. Presently, he would look

at her. One sense at a time was enough ; how could man bear too manifold a joy ? To touch her, — that was Eden. That first embrace he chose in sacred darkness.

. . . “Now would I behold thee, — now would I look upon thy face. I would gaze into thine eyes, for they are mine. I would feed my sight upon thy lips, for I have kissed them with the kisses of my mouth ! A blight upon the night, that it is too dark to see the glory of thy face, my own ! ”

“ Were it not dark, then were we not together, O my lover. Curse not the gloom that gives me to thine arms. Why, Lazarus, I am happy to be here ! Dear, my lord — I love thee.”

“ I bless the night, I bless the storm, I bless the wreck, I bless the dark — and thee I bless, Zahara. I enfold thee — and I worship thee.”

“ Lazarus ? ”

“ Zahara ! ”

“ I must depart. I must return. I must get me to my father ” —

“ Zahara, thou must stay, thou must remain, thou must rest upon my heart.”

“ How long, my lord ? ”

“ Till I release thee.”

“ That must be immediately, sweet sir.”

“ That shall be when I elect, fair lady.”

“ Thou art a Herod. Thou playest the tyrant with a maiden.”

“If thou art not happy of such tyranny, thou art as free as the bird that flieth above the tree-top.”

“Zahara?”

“What wouldst thou, Lazarus?”

“Thou answerest me not. Wouldst thou be free of me? Rebellest thou against thy Herod? Then leave me. Go, Zahara. By the oath of Isaac, who did honor and love Rebecca, I stay thee not, if thou mislikest thy tyrant. Wouldst depart, Zahara? Wouldst thou go from me?”

“Nay, then, Lazarus, for I cannot.”

“I constrain thee not. See! My arms release thee. Why dost thou not escape them?”

“Dear, my lord, I have said it. I go not, because I cannot. A power greater than the force of a man’s arm constraineth me. Nay, I escape not.”

“Name me the name of this power, Zahara.”

“Behold, I know not, Lazarus. Perhaps men call it love.”

“Zahara! Princess! Bright One! Shining! Thou dearest! Thou Divinest! I clasp thee! I control thee! Thou nestlest to my heart like a little slave.”

“Behold me! I am the slave of my love, and thou art its lord, and mine. Lazarus! . . . Be unto me as thou wilt, and what thou willest, that am I to thee. . . . I love thee!”

With joy that blotted out life and death, and heaven and earth, from the young man's consciousness, he sealed those womanly words upon her warm, uplifted lips. When from the hindrance of ecstasy his breath returned to him, and the voice thereof, he sought to try the maiden, what should be the meaning of her soul to him.

"Zahara, thou knowest me what I am, — Lazarus the Builder, an honorable man ; but thou art the daughter of the High priest. Thine am I utterly and always. What art thou to me and to the love of my heart, for it is mighty ? Man and woman born of one rank, and unhindered of their will, — these wed ; but that thou wouldst not. Thou couldst not stoop to *me*."

"I have said it," whispered Zahara timidly.

"What hast thou said ? The ears of my soul are deaf. I am stunned with joy. Lovest thou me, Zahara . . . enough for *that* ?"

"My lord, behold thine handmaid. Be it unto me as thou electest."

So said Zahara, not inaudibly, but in a strong, sweet voice. She lifted her face from the breast of her lover, and threw her fine head back, that she might regard him, or try to regard him, through the dark. For a moment, silence, sweeter than speech, succeeded to her incredible words. Delirious with delight, Lazarus leaned

toward her. She drew away from him a little, in a kind of sudden terror, whether of him, or of herself, or of the thing which she had said.

“Now neither Annas nor any man shall say me nay,” vowed Lazarus, “but I will have thee to wife.”

A few men and women know for one hour in their lives, and one only, and most of us at no time, moments such as came that night to this youth and maiden, cast by accident into that precious solitude which they wrested from fate as hid treasure. In an age and a state of society where honorable man and woman may converse without a witness, the rarity and value of that meeting between Lazarus and Zahara can hardly be appreciated.

Who can blame them that they forgot all else but each other, saving the reverence of their great love? The storm, the shipwreck, the rescue, the rescuer, the poor bondsmen floating to who knew what fate, the old man agonized on the distant shore,—these were as if they were not to the lovers. Was not Zahara drenched through all her pretty, flimsy clothes? She thought not, knew not, cared not. Was she not chilled to the heart, and shivering with cold?

“Nay, my love, thou warmest me. Thine arms are robes and cover me. Thou command-

est, and I am at ease. Thou breathest upon me, and I am strong."

"Thou lovest me, and I am deified!" cried Lazarus.

Ah, then, arms meet, and lips linger, and vows are breathed, and longing whispered, and hope and reverence and rapture sway and control the loving, to whom this snatch of joy may be the first, the last, the only concession that they can wrest from fate. How long they stayed in that desolate, storm-swept spot neither of these lovers ever knew. Zahara came to herself first, — gently unclasped his fingers from her yielding arms, and staggered to her feet.

"*This* time," said Zahara, "I shall go."

"One more," pleaded the lover, — "one little moment more."

"My poor old father!" said Zahara. "Wouldst thou love me better, Lazarus, if I forgot him altogether? All this time, while we have been so happy, he mourneth for me as among the dead. Shall I be the better wife to thee, my lord, for being so poor a daughter?"

Lazarus, at these dear words, yielded utterly. Without further protest, he took Zahara home at once, as he should have done long ago. The walk was long, — yea, blessedly long. The maiden smiled thereat. Though now, exposed to the night wind, she began to feel the effect

of her shipwreck, yet she made no complaint. Lazarus wrapped her in his talith, and shielded her, and held her to his heart, half lifting her and half supporting her over the rough way.

As they walked, they discoursed more quietly, as the mood fell upon them; and it now seemed to Lazarus that he must, if ever, make known to the maiden the mystical manner of her rescue. With some hesitation, he inquired of her what she remembered of the shipwreck.

“The boat overturned — and Rebecca screamed — and the slaves cried out. Poor Rebecca! I forgot Rebecca. I hope the fellows saved her. She did cling upon the boat. But I fell over into the water, — and it was colder than death, — and I prayed Jehovah to save me. And then I began to sink; and then some person caught me — and that is all I know.”

“Who dost thou suppose saved thee, my own,” asked Lazarus tenderly, “and how thinkest thou such a deed was done?”

“Verily, I know not,” answered Zahara carelessly.

“But who brought thee from the wreck unto the shore, Zahara? It is a long space; two stadia at least, I think.”

Zahara shook her head perplexedly.

“Was it thou?”

“Alas, Zahara, I swam about a boat’s length

to thee. The waters beat me back. I could do no more for thee than thy silken sail."

"It is singular," said Zahara. "Was it one of the slaves?"

"It was the King of kings!" cried Lazarus abruptly. Zahara lifted her large, warm eyes. They looked a little critically at him, through the gloom. Was Lazarus subject to mania? Had the shipwreck disordered his intellect?

There was nothing less to do, and Lazarus told her the amazing facts. He expected them to overwhelm Zahara; perhaps to convert her to his own faith in the wonderful Rabbi. To his perplexity, Zahara received the story coolly.

"Thou madest some mistake, my love," she answered; "thy fright and the darkness did deceive thee. Some of the slaves swam ashore with me."

"Impossible!" cried Lazarus. "He whom I name did walk the sea and carry thee, and lay thee at my feet, and disappear. Sawest thou ever a slave do that?"

"Some of these fellows have wonderful art," said Zahara incredulously. "They do extraordinary things."

Zahara's beautiful face, lifted to Lazarus, bore the high-bred skeptical expression of the cultivated doubter. Lazarus was terribly pained by it for the moment. Then she smiled, and he

kissed her and forgot it, for the lights of Capernaum gleamed through the night suddenly at a curve in the shore ; and yonder was the villa, and they must part — who knew when, who knew how, to meet again ?

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Lazarus and Zahara reached the town, the last trace of the storm had ceased. The stars were out, and their cold light glanced upon the subsiding waves unsympathetically. The lake wore her commonplace face. Danger was gone as suddenly as it had come. Boats were out in search of the shipwrecked party.

The streets were nearly vacant, for all who could leave their homes were crowded on the beach. Lazarus and Zahara entered the town unnoticed, as separate and safe as two ghosts. Had they, in fact, gone down in the lake that wild night, and had their spirits returned from their drowned bodies to mingle with the living, they could not have met a more quiet reception. This, under the circumstances, was delightful. They clung to each other as they trod the open streets, and in the shadows of houses they lingered to exchange the maddening words of love and separation. The young man lifted the maiden and helped her weary feet along; and she clung to him, haughty Zahara! and nestled to him, as he had said, "like a little slave."

She was so wet, and now began to be so chilly, that he hurried as fast as might be with her toward her father's villa, staying for nothing, not even to search for the High priest upon the shore; for Lazarus felt that the more quickly and quietly the maiden should be restored to her home, the better pleased the old man would be.

Within the walls of her own garden, Zahara took the last touch from her lover's lips.

When could there be another moment like this! She clung to him, delaying its agony and ecstasy, and had well-nigh unmanned him by her emotion.

"Oh, my lord," murmured Zahara, "I am the happiest woman and I am the saddest woman in all Judea."

"And I the proudest man and the most wretched in all the world!"

"Farewell, my own, sweet my lord, farewell. I give thee my face, and my lips I give thee for the last time!"

"Then shall there be a thousand last times!" vowed Lazarus, "for I will take nothing less of earth or heaven than thee, Zahara."

"But how, sir, wilt thou do this thing? Verily, I know the High priest, my father. His will standeth like an open tomb between us."

"Then into it I step," cried the lover, "but I will have thee. The man who loveth as I

love, Zahara, becometh as a god. He taketh power into his soul and into his body that other men know not. He createth and he destroyeth, and means and hindrances are not to him as unto common men. Thou crownest him with thy love, and he is a king. Thou givest him the treasure of thy life, and he hath divinity. Leave the way to me, Zahara, but mine thou shalt be. Nor will I be contented with the least of thee nor a portion of thee, but I will have all Zahara, as Heaven heareth me ! ”

Zahara made him no answer, in so far as the answer of words counteth, but she lifted to him lips that a man might have died for, and clasped him with arms that a king might have lived for ; and Lazarus spoke no more ; but, trembling with their love and grief, they passed on silently across the deserted gardens, and so Lazarus bore her to her father's house.

Great agitation prevailed in the villa. The officers and servants hurried to and fro, going on fruitless errands, and ordered wildly about by a distracted old man, whom some one had been discreet enough and powerful enough to lead home. He was said to have become quite useless on the shore, having gone frantic with grief when the storm shut the lake from sight ; and the persistent refusals of the bystanders to man a relief boat in the height of the gale

emphasized the desperateness of the situation to his mind. The High priest was accustomed to being obeyed, to controlling masses of people, to achieving the difficult or apparently impossible, and it took him longer than it would an ordinary man to understand that his daughter was probably drowning, and that nobody could save her.

The house was lighted abundantly for an Eastern house of those times. The old man ordered candles and lamps scattered everywhere ; he seemed to believe that the boat might perceive the light, — the house standing so high and being visible from the lake, — and cheated himself with this pitiful expedient, while his messengers were running to and fro between the lake and villa with commands and reports. At the moment when Zahara arrived, the news preceded her that the pleasure-boat had been found capsized, with one of its occupants clinging thereto. This was Rebecca the handmaid, who had accidentally been caught in one of the ropes of the boat, and so had been rescued and brought ashore. Of her mistress, who was pitched violently in the raging sea, nothing could be found. The oarsmen were gone. The two slaves, whom the High priest had ordered off from shore in a little rescuing boat, had been swamped and drowned ; but this incident scarcely excited any

remark. Human life, at best, was cheap in those days, and slave life a cipher in the sum.

Annas stood in his brightly lighted portico, a trembling, weakened old man, as pale as any of his drowned slaves at that moment tossing in the lake. The messengers from the beach had torches, and their wild flare shot over the High priest's face and figure. He presented a piteous picture. When some one from the rear of the group pushed forward the drenched and weeping Rebecca, the excitement of the wretched father culminated in an outcry which shook the souls of those who heard it.

"*You*, and not *she* ! *Your* miserable life, — of less value than the least tassel that tossed upon the silken fringes of her garments ! How dare you show your paltry face above the waters that have overwhelmed hers ? The least you could have done were to have gone to your doom beside her. It was the last act of service you could render to your mistress. Shame upon you, that you did it not ! A curse upon the miserable crew of you that had the impertinence to live when death selected Zahara ! ”

“Father,” said a rich, deep voice from the shadow of the garden, “do not scold poor little Rebecca. It was no fault of hers ; and I am quite safe.”

Zahara stepped forward in her stately way :

she stood as calmly as a Greek statue in a heathen temple, and with a very similar grace. In the outcry and confusion that followed her sudden appearance, Zahara maintained a supreme quiet, which acted powerfully upon the excited scene.

In point of fact she was elevated above it by excitement beside which this looked small to her. The experience of the last hour seemed to the girl to belittle all others. What was this fret and chatter about human life, compared to the existence of such a love as she and he who loved her knew?

The pure face of Zahara, pale with emotion, shone brilliantly; her wet white robes caught the glare of the torches, and flung it back. She seemed to scintillate, as she stood there, like a great gem, many faceted and nobly set. A weaker woman, or a less royally builded one, would have sunk with exhaustion by this time, fainted in her father's arms, or sobbed, like Rebecca the slave.

Zahara had never felt so strong in her life. The kisses of her lover were warm yet upon her rich lips. Her chilled blood tingled with his last caress. His firm, imperious hand had but just now released her own, as he helped her forward boldly into the group, and stood reverently but insistently beside her, that he might lead her to

her father's breast. His presence was fire, light, warmth, food, strength, life. Zahara felt lifted above everything. She feared no one. The High priest was no more formidable than any common father. She ran into his arms like any plebeian daughter, and fondled him girlishly, and Annas, like any unimportant parent, broke down and wept, and clasped the girl, and blessed her, and blessed the God of his priesthood and of his people for her dear life.

"And behold," cried Zahara, "him who did save the life of thy daughter, O my father!"

Lazarus uttered an involuntary protest. This movement of Zahara's was totally unexpected to him. Who could count upon Zahara? What was Lazarus to do? Words sprang to his lips, he knew not what, — honest, manly, mad denial. But Zahara turned her high head and gave him one look. That look sealed his lips. It said more than man could battle against, or more than he could fight against at that exhausted moment. Of the two, the young man seemed more exhausted than the woman.

"The lady doth overestimate my slight assistance," murmured Lazarus, bowing before the High priest. "But I was so fortunate as to be able to help her across a difficult portion of the shore, which I did to the best of my poor ability."

At this instant something tinkled at the young man's feet. Stupidly he stood staring down. A brilliant bauble shone on the wet pavement; his foot all but crushed it as he moved to examine the thing.

"Pray, sir," said Zahara imperiously, "be so courteous as to pick up for me the bracelet which has fallen from my arm."

As Lazarus stooped to do this, the lady bent a little above him or toward him that she might receive the trinket (a glittering band of emerald and jacinth) from his hand. In doing so she contrived to breathe a few words, inaudible to any ear but that of the maddest love or the wildest jealousy, but perfectly distinct to the bewildered and perplexed young man.

"Contradict me not. Who saveth the daughter serveth the father. For love's sake, leave the matter to me."

"Father," added Zahara, "I have been thanking the young man for my part, for my debt to him is mighty. See thou to it, for thine own part now, that his high deed is well regarded; for I am wet and weary, and would get among my maidens and seek rest. Thy daughter would have been tossing yonder in the lake, with thy doomed slaves, O my father, but for his valor and his strength who has returned me to thine arms. I know not how he did the

deed," added Zahara, with an apparent simplicity which was none the less effective because it happened to be the truest thing she said. "I cannot tell thee how I am saved; but saved I am, and by his hand whom I do honor for the doing of it, I am restored to thee. If he swam for me," concluded Zahara prettily, "he is a mighty man. At all events I do know him for a brave one and an honorable, and I do bless him in thy hearing and that of all thy household; and now farewell, good sir. A woman's gratitude go with thee! My father, sir, will entertain thee for my sake, and for that of the service thou hast done to the house of the High priest in the salvation of my poor life."

With these words Zahara departed very gracefully and sweetly with her maidens, leaving the astounded Lazarus to his conscience and his perplexity — and the High priest.

Annas advanced to him with outstretched arms. His venerable countenance stirred with powerful emotions; these contradicted each other, and made a battle-ground of his eyes and lips. The two men regarded each other with the mingled impressions usual to their meetings. Each attracted to each, midway of his attraction met repulsion; or perhaps it were truer to call it distrust or recoil. Annas could not explain why he held such reserved opinions of the young

man to whom he felt consciously drawn. But Lazarus knew quite well why he shrank from the High priest, the powerful enemy of the religious movement dear to so many of the middle and lower classes of Jewish society; and yet why he could have loved Annas, the father of Zahara. On that night the two came together swiftly and heartily. The tide of the occasion swept distrust away. Father love and lover's love united them instinctively. The High priest overwhelmed the young man with expressions of gratitude for the rescue of his daughter.

"Nay, but I deserve not such tribute of the High priest," protested Lazarus in embarrassment. "What I have done was but a trifle. You do overrate my share in the salvation of the lady."

"You speak courteously, sir," replied the High priest, waving the protest away with a magnificent hand. "But the word of my daughter suffices. I recognize in you the saviour of her life, and I pray you to allow me to regard you in accordance with the facts."

Lazarus was silent from sheer perplexity. How should he contradict the testimony of Zahara, and to her father? What should he, what *could* he do?

"By your leave," he answered, with some awkwardness, "I will now return to my khan.

I had forgotten the circumstance, but verily I believe my garments are wet also. I should seek shelter and rest."

"And by *your* leave," returned the High priest, with great courtliness of manners, "you will seek no shelter, while you remain at Capernaum, save the roof of the High priest, father to Zahara, whose life you have preserved."

CHAPTER XV.

IN the village of Bethany gossip was agog. The extraordinary rumor of the healing of Ariella had scarcely been set in motion before it was overtaken by another of a startling character.

Upon the day following the wonder, the neighbors flocked to the house of Malachi, and demanded to see proof of the case. But the maiden remained invisible. The house was inhospitably closed. No visitor was allowed entrance. No excuses were offered. Silently and sullenly the barred door replied to all advances. The people grew restless at this treatment and became clamorous, raising a cry without : —

“Malachi hindereth the maiden! He denieth the deed, and refuseth the proofs thereof! Shame on him! Shame on the Pharisee!”

Malachi, who loved to stand well with his neighbors, and at all events, if he did not, objected to being told of it, presented himself promptly at this turn of affairs. He opened the door and stood without it, a scowling man, too evidently on the defensive for his smooth words to be received with easy admission.

“Alas, my neighbors, and alas, my friends!” said Malachi, “condole with me for the calamity that has overtaken my house. The damsel my daughter, whom the Pretender hath so basely wronged by false hopes and injurious excitement, which might even prove fatal to so sick a person, has no miracle to offer you. No healing hath been wrought upon her. As she was, she is and remains. Ariella cannot lift her head from her couch. I have reasoned with her to come forth and show herself to her neighbors, and offer proof of the marvel which was reported to the village yesterday. But she ariseth not. She is helpless upon her bed. A condition hath set in, consequent upon the excessive agitation to which she has been subjected, which causes me the deepest anxiety. If she becomes dangerously ill, or if, indeed, her former helplessness increaseth, as I fear me it may do, I promise you this fellow shall be arraigned for sorcery and evil charms.”

“How can that be?” interrupted a cool voice from the crowd, “when it seems he hath wrought no wonder in the maiden?”

The speaker was Amos, the proprietor of Gethsemane, a calm man, accustomed to weigh his words, and habitually undisturbed in his loyalty to the Nazarene.

“At least,” replied Malachi, in some embar-

rassment, "if it be not sorcery, then call it illegal interference with the sick. I stand not upon the name: it is the deed I do withstand. And the deed wrought upon my daughter is beyond the law, and an ignorant fellow hath exposed her to the consequence thereof. I demand punishment upon him, for the state of the damsel is worse than ever, since he did meddle with her case."

"Let us converse with the damsel," demanded Amos. "Let some women of the neighborhood be admitted to her."

"I would deal with Ariella myself," said Rachel, the mother of Baruch. "I was witness of the healing, and I would be witness of the relapse, if such it be in deed and truth. The honor of my own word is at stake in the matter. I do greatly petition that I may be admitted to the maiden."

"That you shall not, then!" cried Malachi, with a clench of the fist. "But for you and your accursed son, smitten of God at his birth, as plainly he deserved, and she who bore him, my daughter had not been in this case more wretched than in her first estate."

A mutter of rebuke arose from the group at this brutal speech. The instinct of the neighbors began to close about Rachel, protectingly, as they did bodily gather in a little group around her. Rachel was greatly distressed.

“At least, Malachi,” she besought, “if I may not see the poor girl, permit me to exchange a word with Hagar, her mother.”

But Malachi replied, sharply, that Hagar his wife was in close attendance upon the urgent needs of Ariella, and could receive no person. With this he retreated, closing and barring the doors of his house, as before.

Excitement now ran high in the hamlet. Rumors of the event had reached Jerusalem, and many sight-seers and curious folk came out from the city, and swelled the little group of residents interested in the affair. Lazarus, absorbed at that time in the excitement of love and business, took no part in the public tremor over his invalid neighbor; and Mary his sister was always a home-keeping, quiet woman. Martha made several efforts to approach the facts of the mysterious case; but, being adroitly baffled by Malachi, soon abandoned the subject, for the more satisfactory interests of preparing sweetmeats of dates and figs for the winter supply of her family. Rachel and Baruch alone, of the neighbors of Ariella, persisted in their attempts to obtain a personal interview with her. But these were as persistently foiled.

Baruch was in a state of pitiful agitation. As days swelled into days and Ariella remained invisible, his misery became so acute that his

mother's sympathy with Ariella wavered in sheer sorrow over her own flesh and blood ; and she added to her son's distress by bewailing the hour in which she had consented to the execution of the miracle within her gates. Baruch's position, take it altogether, was a hard one, and growing worse, when the news reached the blind man that public opinion had taken a decided turn.

Malachi was flatly accused of imprisoning his daughter, that the recovery should not be verified of the people, and the claims of the Nazarene emphasized by so merciful and beautiful a cure.

This view of the case did not seem to lessen, but rather to increase, the unhappiness of Baruch. Between his vision of the old Ariella, flung down from the heights of hope to the old, sad, familiar fate, and the new Ariella, condemned, in the first thrill of recovery, to a brutal, mock assumption of that fate, he had not much to choose. Either was bad enough ; and either, at moments, seemed worse than the other. Worst of all was the cruel shock given by the turn events had taken to the touching faith of Baruch in the Nazarene.

It was impossible to say what was the effect of this shock. His mother observed him with a motherly impatience which vitiated her power to interpret his condition. The blind man, al-

ways possessed of the reticence of his infirmity, sank into a systematic silence and inner solitude in which a sensitive nature may easily perish. He frequented the environs of the house of Malachi patiently; but for admittance he had ceased to hope or ask. Ariella remained invisible; nor did any reliable report of her condition reach the villagers, among whom curiosity and indignation were increasing steadily.

One afternoon, Baruch, being led by the lad with whom he was accustomed to go forth, disappeared altogether from Bethany. He did not return at dusk. Night fell, and nothing was seen of him. At parting from his mother he had bidden her feel no concern at his absence, nor expect him until she should see him. Rachel, therefore, awaited him with no more than the inevitable uneasiness of a woman in such a position. Baruch occasionally took these notions, and demanded his freedom, like a man with eyes. The woman, like the rest of her kind, had nothing to do but to bear it.

Midnight came; but Rachel sat alone. Morning followed, noon, dusk again; but Baruch did not return. A second night's absence succeeded to the first. The third evening set in. Rachel was now thoroughly uncomfortable, inasmuch as her poor boy had sent her no sign or message. So long an absence he had never

made from home, in a fashion so unprotected. It occurred to Rachel to seek the advice of the Nazarene, for it was said by the common people that he was never too weary, or too busy, or too indifferent to give counsel to any person who did need and ask it ; but she learned that he was absent from Jerusalem ; some said this way, some that ; he was in Tiberias, Capernaum, Jericho, this place or the other, no one knew, and every one knew where ; but he was not to be found.

Meanwhile, the situation at the house of Malachi remained unaltered. Crowds gathered daily before the doors, and cries and jeers arose from the people whenever the big figure of the Pharisee appeared in sight. Malachi had lost so much sleep by dint of noisy demands that he should come forth and give account of the condition of his daughter that he became at length overcome with drowsiness and ill temper, and, abandoning all attempts to treat for decency's sake with the crowds, barred his door, and threw himself upon a rug before it to rest. The women of his household remained closely concealed : whether by choice or of necessity who could say ?

Two days following the one upon which Baruch disappeared from Bethany, a stout but tired ass, ridden by a man and a boy, might

have been seen in the outskirts of Tiberias, stopping to rest. The animal was an excellent one, capable of making a forced journey; but he looked as if he had made it. The lad was tired out and fretful. The man was blind. All three bore signs of the need of sleep.

"Go yonder, Enoch," said the blind man wearily, "unto the first house thou passest, and inquire for food and drink and fodder for the ass. I will pay for it whatever is required. Thou art weary, and needest food at once. Bring to me, but partake first thyself. I wait here with the animal. He whom we seek cannot be far away. We shall accomplish our errand to-day, God willing, and return home as we came."

When the lad had departed, the blind man sank upon the ground beside the ass; and, keeping his hand closely upon the rein, that the creature might not stray from him, he yielded himself, without the little disguise that he maintained before the boy, his guide, to the saddest of his thoughts. It had been a hard, and so far a fruitless journey. Traveling in the rear of a large caravan passing that way, he and his little companion had been, as chance had it, well protected from such dangers of the trip as their defenseless condition might have exposed them to; but the object of the journey was still unattained. He was disheartened and perplexed.

“Baruch,” said a gentle voice close to the blind man’s ear, “whom seekest thou?”

A vivid color shot violently across the helpless face which Baruch lifted to the speaker.

“Master! — *Thee*.”

“And to what end?”

“Master, that the wonder that thou wroughtest may be confirmed.” In hurrying, broken words Baruch began to tell the tale of the events which had overtaken Ariella; but in the midst of his own recital he checked himself abruptly, and in a tone of piercing conviction said: —

“Lord, I do but cast drops of water upon the Lake of Gennesaret, in making words with thee. Thou knowest my speech before it mounteth unto my mouth; and all that occurreth to the maiden thou knowest. Master, I am dumb, as I am blind, before thee. Be merciful unto me, and save the maiden from her plight.”

Then he who stood beside the blind man did converse with him in a tone that was wondrous fine and kind, and infinite pity dwelt within his voice, and it was like none other of the voices of men upon the earth. The exquisite ear of the blind man quivered beneath it, with a sense of pleasure richer than the sight of those who saw. The Nazarene spoke with him of the length and weariness of the journey, of the uncertainty of

his errand, of the persistence of his trust ; and demanded of him whether he had felt no doubt of the wisdom of the undertaking, in view of the difficulty of finding whom and what he sought.

“I expected to find thee,” answered Baruch simply, “and thou art here.”

“Believest thou,” asked the Nazarene, with a sudden change of tone, into which something almost like sternness had crept, — “believest thou that it is with the maiden as I wrought upon her ?”

“Lord,” said Baruch, “had I not believed, had I been here ?”

“Then do thou return,” commanded the Nazarene, in a deep voice, “unto thy place in Bethany. Follow my bidding, and go thou back unto thine own house. There shalt thou be justified of thy faith ; for it is mighty.”

The blind man started immediately. This seemed a poor ending to all his toil and travel. But he arose, and turned his face about.

“If the lad who guideth me were here,” he said, “I would depart at once.”

“Baruch, Blessed of God !” cried the Nazarene, with evident emotion. “Again I say unto thee, hast thou naught to ask of me for *thyself* ?”

“Lord,” said Baruch humbly, “what have I

to ask? What thou doest to the maiden thou doest unto me."

"But," insisted the Rabbi, with what seemed to Baruch to be a break in his own voice, "art thou then without a need or a desire like other men, that thou forgettest thyself in the case of another as a star is forgot in the midday sun?"

"Lord," said Baruch, after a long and tremulous silence, "if I *had* a thing to ask of thee, it were that I might look upon her face for the space of so much as goeth between the opening and closing of an eyelid, before I die. But I was born blind."

"Go upon thy way," replied the Nazarene solemnly. "Take the lad who cometh, and return in peace. Safety travel with thee, and speed bring thee unharmed to thine own house! At the door of thy house, in Bethany, at the hour of thy return, fall upon thy knees, and call upon my name, and between the opening and closing of an eyelid thou shalt be Blessed of God, for thy faith's sake."

But when the lad came, the Nazarene had departed, and Baruch stood alone beside the ass. So they saddled the animal at once, and returned as they came. And Enoch, the boy, wondered at this greatly; but Baruch said nothing to explain himself.

Upon the sixth evening after the departure of her son, Rachel sat in her house at Bethany, oppressed at heart. A summons at the gate startled her strained ears, and she answered it herself, with the nervous haste of the anxious.

"Let us within, Rachel," loudly whispered a familiar voice eagerly. "Let us within, quickly, and shelter us in the name of the Nazarene."

Rachel's face fell, for it was not Baruch. Two women stood there, trembling. These were Hagaar and Ariella.

"In the name of the Nazarene, enter ye!" cried Rachel. Hospitably and heartily she drew the two women within her door, breathlessly demanding: "How came ye here?"

"We walked," said Hagaar laconically, in her bass tone.

"But how came *she* here?"

"Ariella walked — all the way — like other people."

"Then the Rabbi was as good as his word. Baruch thought so all the time. I confess, when I heard the tongue of the people wag, I knew not what to think; but enter ye, enter, my neighbors, and sup with me."

"I go as I came," said Hagaar hurriedly. "I return to the house of Malachi, for he is my lord, and I am subject to him. But over Ariella he shall tyrannize no longer, since I am

her mother, and have legs of my own and a mind to move them. All these days we have been prisoners in the house of Malachi, my husband, — shame to him that I must own it to the neighbors! To-night, as God willed it, he did fall asleep until he doth snore, praised be Jehovah, upon the rug before the door. Then I arose, and did pinch him to make sure of him, and I did pinch as hard as I dared, for I found it agreeable; but he awaked not. So I fled in the dark with Ariella. And she moved as if she had wings upon her feet, and we ran here all the way that we might free her. Take the maiden, neighbor Rachel, I pray thee, and shelter her till I demand her again of thee.”

With these words Hagar departed as unexpectedly as she came, leaving Ariella with her friend.

“I told Baruch,” observed Rachel dryly, “that he might trust a she-animal with her young, and Hagar, the mother of Ariella, against Malachi, who is naught but a husband.”

But Ariella did not reply. She was cruelly excited by all that she had undergone. Her eyes and cheeks blazed. She seemed like a creature on fire. She could neither speak nor rest. Her feverish glance shot about the room inquiringly.

"She misses Baruch," thought Rachel, "but she will not say so. Sit down, Ariella. Sit and rest, and tell me all about it."

Ariella obeyed so far as to seat herself upon the nearest divan. But she told Rachel nothing at all. She looked at her appealingly. She seemed unable to articulate, for weariness or fright.

"Thou art a poor lamb!" cried Rachel, in a more motherly tone. "How shall I comfort thee? I would that Baruch were here. My heart is sore over Baruch, my son, for he hath been lost from me, this is the sixth day."

"Baruch?" cried Ariella, suddenly finding her voice. "Baruch lost? Let me go and find him!"

She sprang to her feet and bounded to the door wildly, flung it open, and dashed out into the night. Rachel followed her with a cry of dismay.

The blind man reached Bethany at dark of the sixth evening. He dismissed his weary little guide with the ass and the wages at the foot of the familiar hill that rose to his mother's house; and, being quite sure of his way where every pebble, nay, every grain of sand, was better known to him than neighbors and friends to men who see, he climbed the ascent alone.

He was exhausted ; but he was quiet, and his face was filled with a divine light. He walked slowly, with his head bent ; his heart was full of high thoughts ; he put out his hand and groped for the latch of the gate.

As he did this it was flung open suddenly, and a girl's voice cried : —

“Baruch ! I come to seek thee, and thou returnest to me. — Baruch ! *Baruch !*”

Then the blind man remembered the saying of the Nazarene, and he fell upon his knees at the gateway of his own home, and he bowed his head and clasped his hands in prayer.

“Lord,” he said aloud, “I call upon thy name that thou mayest be justified of thy works, and mercy come to the maiden who is dearer to me than eyesight to the blind.”

Now, when this had happened, Baruch opened his eyes and lifted his face, and “between the opening and shutting of an eyelid” the man born blind looked, and behold he saw.

And what he saw was the fairest sight in all the world to him : the maiden of his heart's desire, Ariella, bending forward, panting a little with her flight from the house to the gate ; Rachel, his mother, behind her, holding high a torch that she had snatched to follow the girl ; and the fire-red light of the torch shining all over Ariella's face and body. Her eyes burned

like stars in mid-heaven ; her delicate lips were parted ; her cheeks were as red as the roses of Sharon ; and her soft hair floated in the wind over her forehead and about her sweet face. Her slender form swayed toward the kneeling man ; her white robe was blown against him ; she stretched out her thin little hands.

“Thou God of my people !” cried the blind man, “have mercy upon me, for I do behold an angel !”

Now, at this, Rachel, his mother, gave a mighty cry, and flung down her torch in ecstasy and terror. But Ariella restrained her, took it from the ground, held it aloft, and stood resplendent and self-possessed, as if she had been an angel indeed.

“She whom thou beholdest is only a girl, dear Baruch,” said Ariella gently, “and blesseth thee.”

Baruch stretched out his arms to her. He did not touch her. But he lifted *seeing* eyes to Ariella. Wonder, awe, delight, delirium, dwelt in them. The two women who loved him stood dumb before that transcendent look.

“Lord,” said Baruch, “I bless thee that between the opening and closing of an eyelid I have beheld the maiden. Now do with me as thou willest. . . . Now, though I return unto my darkness forever, yet am I blessed of God among all seeing men.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE guest of the High priest at Capernaum could not sleep. The rich Eastern starlight regarded him soothingly; the wind had fallen; the angry waters of the lake were appeased; the luxurious couch of Lazarus wooed him to rest; perfect stillness brooded upon the household of Annas; it was more like the silence of death than of life, so exhausted were the members of the High priest's family. The experience of the evening had been onerous to the comfortable, Oriental nature, which likes to take things easily; and from Annas to the lowest slave within the villa, the reaction of stolid slumber succeeded to the nervous excitement of the day. Zahàra herself slept like a little tired girl. Only Lazarus kept watch.

For him it was the wildest stimulant to rest beneath the same roof which sheltered the woman of his love. Accident had thrown to him the treasure of a chance which, in the ordinary social course of events, would never have been his. He dreamed and trembled over it. His heart thrilled with the tenderest fancies, and sank

into the saddest despair. The situation, seen from the lonely shore of the lake, in shock and storm, and in the teeth of death, with Zahara clasped upon his heart, was one thing: the autocracy of love took hold of it, and dashed it into the rainbow colors and shapes of hope. That Zahara must be his, somehow, somewhere, seemed then only a matter of course, the simplest axiom in the problem of life. Now, viewed from the villa of Annas, and from the solitude of midnight, and from the renewal of social conventions, the position of the lovers looked to be another matter. Lazarus stood aghast at it. How in the name of love's dearest dream was he ever to win for wife the daughter of the High priest? If he could have snatched the girl, and seized her, and away with her upon the fleetest camel of the desert, with Ishmaelite guards, unto some Ishmaelite home, and there cherished and protected her, and adored her, and kept her to himself forever —

Visions such as his maddest moment had never known beset the quiet soul of Lazarus. His nature had struck a tempest. In storms like these, the calmest, the gentlest, the purest hearts go to wreck. Lazarus was in a moral whirlwind.

His situation was complicated by the too ready subterfuge of Zahara concerning the man-

ner of her rescue. He had fallen into her loving trap at the moment in sheer happiness and bewilderment. How contradict a lady? and she the idol of his life and the daughter of his host? But solitude criticised Lazarus. Midnight reviewed his position with severity. Sleeplessness said strange things to him. Darkness held mute reproaches before him. Friendship and love wrestled together in his tormented sensibility. A touch calmer than Zahara's recalled him. A face graver than hers regarded him. Colder, purer, higher, than the delirium of love, the eyes of duty looked into his own. That solemn figure, tall and stately, treading down the tempest, walked with sacred feet throughout his thoughts. He remembered the Nazarene with a profound self-scorn.

As soon as it was dawn, Lazarus hastened from his chamber into the pure, pink air. It was a peaceful morning. The lake lay like a sleeping baby in the cradle of the hills. The storm had freshened all the world. The colors of the trees and gardens seemed to throb with life. Lazarus stepped out among the dew-dripping fruit-trees with bowed and saddened head.

It was with a sharp emotion, half pain, half pleasure, that he saw, as he turned back toward the villa, the figure of the High priest advancing

to meet him. Annas was alone. The two men met with unprecedented cordiality. The heart of Lazarus warmed toward the father of Zahara, and that of Annas melted toward her saviour. The High priest passed the courtesies of the morning with his guest in terms of unusual heartiness. He began at once to renew his expressions of gratitude for the rescue of his daughter. It was then that Lazarus suddenly, almost violently, interrupted him : —

“ Sir, I do wrong myself and you. No longer can I endure this miserable position. If I tacitly accept the false, falseness enters into me. I must undeceive you at once.”

“ Pray, sir,” said the High priest, looking slightly startled, “ to what circumstance or circumstances can your language possibly refer ? ”

“ To the strangest of circumstances, and the most difficult to explain — to yourself.”

“ Why, indeed, to myself ? ” asked the priest, with a haughty curl of the lip. “ Am I so dull of intellect that the events of life may not be made comprehensible to my mind ? ”

Lazarus bowed, with a deprecating motion of the hand, which was reply enough to the sarcasm of the priest. After a moment’s silence he said abruptly : —

“ It was not I who saved the life of the lady Zahara, your daughter. Would that I could

claim a privilege too valuable to have been accorded by heaven to me."

The High priest gave his guest a narrow look, quick as the flash of a scimitar, and as quickly sheathed.

"To whom, then, if not yourself, my worthy sir, am I indebted for this heaviest of obligations?"

"To the last man in Judea from whom you will desire to receive it."

Lazarus brought these words out in a prompt, ringing tone. The man in him was aroused. His fine conscience was throbbing. At least, truth sat in his soul. To deny his friend by remaining in a false position began to seem intolerable to him. Better even to displease Zahara. He had arrived as far as that. His breath came more freely, and he lifted his handsome head.

"Explain yourself," said the priest curtly. Annas had stopped his lordly pace through the garden, and the two men now stood still, facing each other beneath a clump of thick fig-trees that hid them from the view of the villa.

"The lady," said Lazarus in a low, distinct tone, "was rescued by Jesus the Nazarene."

The face of the High priest darkened slowly, but perceptibly. He received this announcement in utter silence.

“My daughter,” he observed at length, in a cutting tone, “testifieth otherwise.”

“Far be it from me,” hurriedly protested Lazarus, losing something of the dignity of his manner of a moment ago, in the tender tremulousness of his desire to protect Zahara, “be it farther from me than from any man in all the world to criticise the lady Zahara, or to question the truth of her words in whose soul honor itself maketh a white home ! ”

“Then be so good,” said the priest, somewhat mollified, but more than ever keenly observant of his guest, “as to explain to me the discrepancy in your own language.”

“The lady,” replied Lazarus boldly, “was, in brief, too nearly dead to know who bore her from the water. She was unconscious from the shock and exposure. Judging from her state when I did first see her, I should say she must have sunk already twice beneath the waters of Gennesaret. She was snatched from death itself, and laid upon the shore at my feet, not one moment too soon, believe me. He who did save her left her immediately, and departed from me. I restored the lady, and I brought her to her father. My service to her began and ended thus and there.”

Annas had listened to these words with emotion, but it was one mixed with displeasure,

incredulity, and annoyance of the keenest kind.

"You were probably mistaken," he observed, "in the identity of the man who rescued her."

"I was not mistaken," said Lazarus decidedly; "he is my friend. I know him well. As well could I be mistaken in the identity of one of the sons of God if I had met one upon the earth. He who did save thy daughter was the Nazarene, and none other; and unto him is thine obligation, and should thy gratitude be due."

"He swam for her, I suppose," remarked the High priest, coldly. "He must be a good swimmer."

"I did as much as that myself," urged Lazarus eagerly, "but the waters beat me back. You should understand that the lake was a whirlpool. I know no man who could swim a stadium upon a sea like that, and bear a helpless woman on his arm. The Nazarene trod the sea, as you, sir, do tread the path of this garden. He arose and walked and bore the maiden, and stepped upon the waters and conquered them, and trod as a man treadeth a floor, and laid her on the shore and vanished, and was seen no more of me or of the maiden. This is the truth of God," concluded Lazarus, "and I do tell it. Do with me as you see fit."

"It is an extraordinary tale," said the High

priest, not without hesitation. But his countenance had grown as stern as a stone intaglio. He turned upon his heel abruptly, and without another word left his guest standing alone beneath the fig-tree.

The position of Lazarus at the villa was now so uncomfortable that he was thoroughly perplexed. For some days the High priest did not again receive his guest. The builder began his work in silent perplexity. Zahara was invisible. Lazarus set himself to his task with an absent mind. Upon the third day he gathered himself, and sent a dignified message to his host by voice of the chief officer of the household, quietly requesting permission to be allowed to return to his khan. Annas responded in person to this message. His manner was studiously polite, but his eye was cold and guarded. He began by entreating Lazarus to accept his further hospitality, adorning the request with the full flower of Oriental emphasis, as etiquette from host to guest demanded.

Lazarus replied with equal courtesy, but repeated his desire to leave the villa.

"It occurs to me," he said, "that it may be more convenient for several reasons, and I pray your permission to depart. I am too much indebted to your politeness already."

"The obligation is upon me, and it is heavy,"

replied Annas, with much manner, "and of the pleasure which it gives me to entertain you, you must allow me to be the judge."

"I have told you," said Lazarus frankly, "that you are under no obligation to myself. That burden resteth elsewhere, as I did somewhat tardily explain to you."

"It is expecting too much of me," answered the High priest, frowning, "to recognize the obligation to which you refer. I prefer to consider yourself as its representative."

"I must decline," said Lazarus, in a low voice, "to be the representative of such beneficence and such purity — of power as far beyond me as the crown of Olivet is above the basin of Genesaret. I must decline in any sense to represent One of whose least remembrance I am unworthy."

"It is amazing to me," said the High priest, in a wary tone, "that a man of your intelligence should be thus deluded. The popular excitement about this fellow is growing a serious matter. Times are ripening wherein it may no longer be a safe play of the tongue for people of your sort to allude, in this way, to so dangerous a political character."

"I must beg you to understand," replied Lazarus, "that I indulge in no play of the tongue when I do mention the name of him whom above all human beings I do revere."

"There are those, I am told," suggested the priest suavely, "who do not regard this pretender as precisely what may be called a human being. I learn that he sets forth imperious and awful claims. Know you of them?"

"Of that to which you refer I know naught," answered Lazarus distinctly. The two men looked each other narrowly in the eye. Lazarus was a poor disciple in those days, but at least he was no traitor. He proceeded with a fearless voice to say:—

"As concerneth his politics, I know naught of them either. I have never regarded Jesus of Nazareth as a politician."

"As what, then, have you regarded him?" demanded the High priest.

"As the best man, the wisest public benefactor, the tenderest consoler, and the truest friend I ever knew," responded Lazarus solemnly. "But as for me, I am not worthy to testify so much as these poor words concerning him. As I have told you, I have been preoccupied, I have not acquainted myself of late, as I should have done, with his affairs."

"So much the better for you!" said Annas sharply. "See to it, sir builder, that you drop this acquaintance, and you may find that the time cometh when you will thank me for a word of advice, which is the least I can offer to the rescuer of my daughter."

“I thank you for your good intentions,” said Lazarus, after a moment’s hesitating silence, “and I appreciate them, but nevertheless I beg to be allowed to return unto my khan.”

“Remain at least until the morrow,” urged the High priest, looking, nevertheless, relieved by the determination of his guest.

“I will accept your hospitality,” said Lazarus politely, “until the morrow.”

That afternoon, as the builder directed his men upon the walls of the new extension, the slave Rebecca passed upon some errand, drawing so near that the wind blew her garment against him. She held a little silver cup in one hand, which, as she passed, she was so awkward as to upset upon the ground. The contents were spilled, and Rebecca made a great show of distress.

“Alas!” she moaned, “it is the cordial for my lady, and it is destroyed!”

Lazarus sprang to help the maiden, and to pick up the silver cup and its heavily chased cover from the ground. The cup was lined with gold. Some cool drink which it had contained was spilled entirely. But pressed to the bottom of the cup Lazarus saw a bit of white wax upon which writing was inscribed. His fingers closed over it instinctively. Rebecca the slave saw nothing, or made as if she saw nothing.

Lazarus scanned the tablet, and concealed it in the folds of his talith.

As soon as he could make an unobserved moment, he read the writing with wild eagerness. It ran like this, in Aramaic characters :—

“Cancel thy contract. Leave Capernaum. At dark-fall of the Sabbath after the Sabbath to come, be on the shore of the lake at the place thou knowest. ZAHARA.”

Lazarus obeyed this order without a moment's doubt or hesitation. Upon the following day he represented to Annas that inasmuch as their relations had become strained and unpleasant it might be more agreeable upon both sides if the work upon the villa were deferred. The High priest received this suggestion with courteous regrets, but with evident approval. He expressed the wish to protect the builder handsomely from any pecuniary loss to which the sundered contract might make him liable.

“Pay to my men the wages due them,” replied Lazarus; “for myself, I prefer to meet the loss. It is naught. I have other engagements. I return to Bethany at once.”

Thus the High priest and his builder parted. Every show of courtesy attended the departure of Lazarus and his men, who were escorted far upon their journey by the officers and servants of the High priest. It was given out in Caper-

naum that the work was simply delayed until the family should be absent from the villa ; the inconvenience of building during their occupation proving greater than had been anticipated.

Lazarus sent no message to Zahara. He thought it safer not to do so. Then, as now, a woman often managed such affairs more deftly and with less danger. He returned to Bethany, a silent, abstracted man, counting the hours till the meeting which Zahara had appointed.

The precious moment came at last. Lazarus had made the journey unattended, except by a single servant, his confidential man Abraham, a fellow silent as the great Sphinx. How Zahara had managed her part of the meeting only Zahara knew. She was quite alone. It was a wild night, stormy and dark ; so stormy that Lazarus had suffered a thousand terrors lest his scanty comfort should be denied him. But there on the beach, in the desolate spot where the Nazarene had left her at his feet, a drowning girl, Lazarus found her, trembling, a brave and loving woman, waiting for her lord.

They met with tears and smiles, caresses and cautions, hopes and despairs, with all the tumult of the loving and denied. Their words were few. Zahara stood palpitating in his arms. She was frightened at her own brave deed. Every moment now was as dangerous as it was dear.

“It stormeth so!” whispered Zahara. “I did not think it would be quite so wet, but surely no one will suspect me. Who will think I *could* be without the villa on a night like this? Rebecca guardeth my chamber and watcheth at the entrance to let me in. I do but fly hither and fly back again, like a dove that returneth to its own nest. I love thee, Lazarus! I love thee, and I warn thee, trust not the High priest, my father, for he groweth distrustful of thee. And, Lazarus! O Lazarus, my lord, be not angry with thy Zahara, but I did fly hither to desire of thee somewhat further.”

“Anything!” cried Lazarus rapturously, clasping the wet and trembling form of the girl to his heart. “Anything thou desirest, that do I for love’s sake and thine own.”

“Then abandon the Nazarene,” whispered Zahara.

The arms of the young man dropped. He retreated a step from her, and Zahara stood tottering, alone in the hard weather. It beat upon her, and she looked so tender and delicate and cruelly treated as she stood there, daring the storm, and more than the storm, for his sake, that the soul of Lazarus was wrung within him.

“Abandon the Nazarene!” repeated Zahara plaintively. “For love’s sake and thine own and Zahara’s.”

“Anything else, Zahara!” wailed Lazarus.

“Ask of me anything *but* this, my own! Try not the soul of him who loveth thee as woman was never loved, by demanding of him the only thing he cannot do for thee, Zahara!”

“I must return,” said Zahara dully. “My errand has been as naught. I am exposed to the storm and the night, and to perils of the road, and to the anger of my father, for thy sake, — and thou refusest me, Lazarus, thou refusest me a trifling boon that any slave girl in Judea might demand of her lover, and not be thought presuming. Farewell, my lord, for I do tarry too long with thee, at too great a cost.”

She lifted her wet, sweet arms, and he took her to his breast. She lifted her beautiful lips, and his pressed them. If Zahara had shown anger, or imperiousness, or cold displeasure at that moment, Lazarus could have withstood her manfully enough; but her womanly, sad tenderness was a terrible weapon.

“Zahara!” he cried, “*Zahara!* How can I refuse thee? And how can I obey thee? Kiss me, and teach me! Kill me, or bless me! How can I wrong my own soul? And how can I grieve thine?”

“That is for thee to discover,” said Zahara. With a long kiss, and a darting motion quick as a bird’s in mid-heaven, Zahara released herself from his arms, and fled back through the storm as she had come.

CHAPTER XVII.

“LORD,” whispered Baruch, “Lord, I did ask naught of thee, and thou hast given me all!”

He uttered these words in an awed, breathless voice, with the manner of a man who spake to some person quite near him. His face was upturned, his hands were clasped, he had fallen upon his knees.

Ariella stood before him, shining and sweet; she smiled while Baruch prayed. But his mother wept for joy, and bowed her head upon her hands. The man born blind had said:—

“My mother, I behold thee! Thou hast a dear countenance. Let me look upon it while I can.” This was hours ago, and still the wonder held. No return of their lifelong darkness had visited those afflicted eyes. As the night had passed on, the rather Baruch testified that his vision clarified. From cloud and haze, and floating, shining spots, and wavering phantasms, and dizzy vagaries of light and shade, firm outline grew, and perspective took her place, and the laws of optics slowly and surely asserted themselves. After the first thrill of delight in the

sight of Ariella, and the natural movement of tenderness toward his mother, a profound religious emotion had seized the devout nature of the blind man. He had passed much of the night in a rapture of prayer which the two women dared not disturb.

"Let him alone," whispered Rachel through her happy tears; "give him his way. He always liked it as well as men with eyes. Praying is safe business, and keeps him out of harm's way, till his sight be stronger, if, praise to God, it doth remain unto him. But for my part, I had rather he slept for a space. There's nothing weareth upon the eyes like watching."

"I would that He were here who hath performed this marvel," murmured Ariella. "He would direct us what to do. He knoweth all things."

"If that be the case, he knoweth enough to manage his own cures," retorted Rachel's practical sense. "Would that he were here, that I might fall down and worship him! But I should leave him to attend to his own affairs. I should not say, 'Lord, shall my son do thus? Must my son do so?' Women do displease men by that manner of prattle; and I suppose he is a man, after all," added Rachel. "I'm sure I don't know what else to call him."

While the women whispered together, Baruch silently prayed on.

Toward morning Ariella slipped away to her own couch, and slept; for she was weary with the accumulating excitement of the day. To the invalid, for years confined to the little world of the sick-room, the recent events of life were nothing less than tremendous. Her scale of estimate was so fine that such experiences were to her soul as wars to the history of nations. The cure of the blind man, crowning the whole, almost stunned the girl. She slept from sheer exhaustion, long and heavily.

Mother and son remained together in the familiar room. Rachel watched Baruch like a tigress her young. Baruch seemed almost unconscious of her. He had fallen into a spiritual ecstasy.

Truly, it seemed that this unusual man cared less, in that hour of his deliverance from the worst of human afflictions, for the newly revealed and precious power of sight than he did that the attitude of his own soul toward the source of this incredible mercy might be the right one. He was, in short, too nearly overcome with gratitude to God and to the Healer to be trivially diverted by the marvels of vision.

"If thou wouldst stop praying long enough to get a nap," suggested his mother at last, "thou couldst begin again afterwards."

"I do but grow stronger as I pray," replied

Baruch gently; "behind my eyeballs I feel weakness strengthen, and power cometh upon me, as if it were the moving of an unseen force. But thou art my mother, and I obey thee."

With these childlike words Baruch turned like a little boy, laid his head upon his mother's knees, and slept. Rachel put her thin, elderly hands upon his curling hair. Her tears fell silently. She dared not move. She sat till dawn, and blessed him. Only she who has borne an afflicted child can understand the thoughts of Rachel.

Commotion ruled the house of Malachi. It was morning; in fact, the banners of the early day were well unfurled upon the fairest of skies and unto the gayest of breezes. It was a cool day, when people are easily astir in Eastern countries, and the crowd in front of the house was larger than usual. Rumor had gone softly, but had whispered that unusual occurrences were taking place within the house of the Pharisee. It was impossible to make out what; and curiosity invented tale upon tale.

The fact was nothing more than Malachi's discovery of the flight of Ariella. Of this event Hagaar, her mother, was the most innocent woman alive. She had waked her lord from his sonorous slumbers, at a late hour, with the agi-

tated announcement that the bed of Ariella was empty. Malachi sprang and cursed. Hagar paled and wept. He stormed and commanded. She searched and sighed. He accused her of complicity in the trick. She denied it in the name of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the souls of the prophets, and by the house of David. He fell into a fury, and she dropped upon her knees. He made as if he would have rushed from the house to discover and secure the maiden. But a glance at the gathering mob in front of his gates deterred him. In vain Hagar entreated him, shrewdly: "Go, my lord, go forth! Hasten and seek thy daughter, lest harm befall her. Go thou and gain news of Ariella, or my heart will be broken within me."

"Nay, then, since thou askest, that I will not!" retorted her husband. "The damsel may go and crucify herself, for aught I will bestir myself for her!"

At this moment the clamor of the people arose shrilly:—

"The maiden! The maiden! Give us news of the maiden on whom the miracle was wrought! Come forth, Malachi, thou double-faced Pharisee, and account for her!"

Upon this, Malachi flung open the door. His disordered appearance and agitated face added

to the jeers of the crowd. As soon as he began to speak, a hum of sarcastic sympathy arose.

"Poor fellow," cried a rough voice, "we are come to mourn with him over his domestic misfortunes. Such a calamity is it, — an invalid daughter!"

"And mine, O my neighbors," protested Malachi, "is greatly increased of her infirmity. Ariella lieth in my house, the most helpless, whining woman of them all. But I may not upbraid her, for I fear me for the nature of her disease, which groweth violent upon her. I do greatly fear me that this sickness is unto death. Condole with me, O my neighbors, and spare me these numerous expressions of your sympathy. Go ye your ways, I do entreat you, and leave an afflicted household in peace unto itself."

At this instant, the crowd parted with a kind of electric shock. The wildest voice hushed. In the silence of stupefaction the people divided to the right and to the left, and fell back.

Straight through them, erect, strong, fair, and smiling, walked Ariella. She was led by Baruch, the man born blind. He turned his face upon his neighbors, with bright, conscious, seeing eyes. Behind them walked Rachel, quivering with joy.

"Behold!" she cried shrilly. "Behold my son, who was born as blind as any mummy in

the sepulchres of Egypt! No man in Bethany seeth better than Baruch seeth on this day. The Nazarene hath wrought the deed. Behold the maiden whom he hath healed! Behold my son to whom he hath given eyes that nature did deny him! Behold Baruch! Behold Ariella! Bless the Nazarene!"

"The Nazarene! The Nazarene!"

The crowd took up the cry. It rose and swelled with a mighty shout. The morning air throbbed with it.

"He hath wrought a wonder in our midst such as no man knoweth of until this day. Where is the Nazarene? Bless him! Crown him! Call him! Jesus of Nazareth be glorified in Bethany from this hour!"

But Ariella and Baruch fell upon their knees at the sound of that precious name; and there, among all the people, they offered thanks unto Jehovah because of him, and forgot the people and forgot the clamor, and remembered nothing but their own once miserable plight, and his power and mercy who had snatched them from it.

But the mood of the people was not so solemn; and another cry quickly replaced the name of the Nazarene.

"Malachi! Malachi the Pharisee! Have him out! Have out the father who denieth the

marvel wrought upon his daughter, and tricketh the people of Bethany and of Jerusalem ! Have him out unto us ! ”

Before any calmer spirit could interfere, the roughs of the crowd had burst open the door of the house, and seized the cursing, shaking Malachi from behind a curtain where he had ingloriously hidden. They had him out, indeed. They tore him out and tossed him to and fro, and, in default of a pool to plunge him in, fetched water, and soured him smartly till he was like to drown. In the sputtering and exhausted condition consequent on this treatment, they rolled him down the hill till he was clothed with dust and well-nigh suffocated. Somewhat appeased by his abject appearance, and by the hard exercise consequent on the handling they had given him, the crowd now returned the unlucky man to his house. Here they forced him upon his own bed, and tied him thereupon with strips of the coverlets till he lay bound hand and foot.

“ Lie there,” shouted a merry voice, “ till you have learned what it is like to be bedridden, and arise not till she whom you have wronged shall have the mind to free you ! If the maiden taketh our advice, she will let you stay, where we do leave you, for this many a day to come ! ”

With this, the people departed, leaving the

thoroughly subjugated Pharisee to the mercy of his women.

Now, among the happy marvels crowding the blind man's experience in these wonderful days, certain circumstances may have interest for those who are inclined by nature to view a wonder always from its natural or scientific side. Many curious incidents befell Baruch in the first use of his eyesight. Common objects had phenomenal proportions for him.

"What manner of man is this?" he asked, when he lifted his eyes to the olive-tree of Bethany. The sight of the mountain-top covered him with perplexity. He said that he had thought it like a timbrel; but this was like a trumpet. At the view of the great desert of Judea, Baruch was overcome. He remained silent before it for a long time; and when he was spoken to, he was found to be in tears.

"The lives of all the blind and sick of all the world lie there," he said.

At his first sight of the sunset he fell upon his knees.

"Behold," he cried, "I see the garment of the living God!"

When the full moon flooded Judea, Baruch walked forth unto the brows of Olivet. Here he remained for that night, until the dawn, alone.

His mother followed him for a space, but, when she saw the high look upon his enraptured face, she turned back and left him to his solitary ecstasy. At dawn, he returned to her, and said : —

“The moon is a lady. She is of high birth. The earth is her lover, and worshipeth her from afar. I have witnessed the loves of earth and heaven.”

“Mother,” added Baruch, after some thought, “why might not Ariella have accompanied me to the mountain, as I did beseech her? I lacked Ariella. I had seen two moons with Ariella. She withdraweth from me.”

“Because thou art no longer a blind boy,” returned Rachel, “but a whole man. Thou must deal with the maiden like other men.”

“I deal with her as the earth dealeth with the moon,” said Baruch.

“But that is no way to treat a girl,” retorted Rachel. “There is no moonshine about Ariella. She hath as good sense, for that matter, as any girl I know. She knoweth, if thou dost not, that except and until she wed thee, she must withhold herself from thee. Ye are no longer two poor fools of affliction, set apart from the laws of God and men, that ye may be trusted together by the hour, as of old. All Bethany — nay, all Jerusalem, for the fame of the wonder hath gone

abroad — would teach ye better, in the gossip of one day.”

“But why did not Ariella tell me so?” protested Baruch naively. “She said unto me that she did not wish to climb the mountain.”

“Why doth a damsel not woo a man, indeed?” cried Rachel, laughing loudly. “Verily, my son, thou provest thyself born blind in spite of the miracle.”

Baruch blushed, and was silent. In a few moments he said carelessly, as if he sought rather to divert than to continue the conversation: —

“When I behold Ariella, I behold two Ariellas. This perplexes me. With one eye I do see the old Ariella, a poor maiden, thin and tender, lying on her long lonely couch. With the other I behold the new Ariella: she springeth and walketh to and fro; she is like the sunrise; she hath an eye like a waterfall. Always do I behold the two Ariellas.”

If Rachel had been a modern scientific student, she would probably have suggested “astigmatism” to Baruch, as an explanation of his peculiar visual condition. As it was, she only remarked that she supposed this was part of the miracle.

It could not be said that Baruch’s attachment to Ariella had suffered default in consequence

of his supreme experience. But it was true for a time, at least, that a higher absorption seemed to add a fine excitement to his condition. Baruch's desire to behold Him who had wrought the wonder upon his own life amounted to a fever. Since his journey he had again sought for the Nazarene everywhere, but this time in vain. It was rumored that Jesus was traveling in Perea, a heathen place, pityingly regarded, where, if there were anything in the new religion, it was sadly needed; at any rate, the Rabbi was beyond reach for the present.

Baruch fell into the habit of haunting the localities frequented by Jesus, in Bethany and Jerusalem; the Mount of Olives especially had a fascination for him. He spent many nights there, as solitary as the lonely devotee whom he sought. As the autumn came on, and the nights cooled, his mother remonstrated with him for the exposure, but he said: —

“Stay me not, O my mother, till mine eyes have beheld him who hath blessed me above all living men.”

But Ariella said nothing at all. She was experiencing in her turn a little of the pang felt by Baruch when she herself was healed. She seemed to be less precious to Baruch than when he was blind. Was it so? Or only that another was grown more dear?

At all events, Baruch trod the familiar path to Mount Olivet with patient, persistent feet, and there he kept a watch of many weeks.

One night, at the decline of the moon, it being cool and the dewfall almost frosty, Baruch on the brow of Olivet looked down, and yonder, treading the ascending path, he beheld the climbing figure of a solitary man. It was late and deserted on the mountain. No idle visitor had ever interrupted Baruch's seclusion on that lonely spot. When he saw the figure of the man who approached him, his heart beat with a violent, suffocating motion. The figure was tall and commanding, but it bent wearily, as if the ascent proved hard. Baruch watched it climb with a passionate desire to run and help the man and be tender to him, as one human heart doth yearn toward another; but this he dared not. So he remained as he was until the man had reached the mountain-top.

The moon, at that moment, fled into a dark cloud, and as the two met—one standing, the other kneeling—the face bent above Baruch was invisible.

"Master," whispered Baruch, "this many a night have I sought thee here to bless thee, and now thou hast come."

The Nazarene stretched out his hand and gently touched or stroked the cheek of the

kneeling man. The action was as tender as a woman's. But it had in it more than feminine tenderness, — a pathetic, manful longing for sympathy too seldom received, too sorely needed. It seemed as if the man were quite unaccustomed to gratitude or recognition so delicate as that of Baruch, and as if he, in his turn, had become the grateful one.

“Lord,” cried Baruch, “unto thy mercy I pray thee add one thing more, that I may be utterly blessed among men.”

“Name thou the thing,” replied the other, but shrinking a little, and speaking wearily, as if disappointed at the utterance, just then, of a personal request.

“Master, that I may behold thy countenance! Only that!” entreated Baruch gently.

At this moment the moon shot from behind her dark veil, and blazed in the Face unto which the kneeling man lifted his awed and yearning eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WINTER came on drearily in Judea that year. There was more rain than usual, and early frosts. The poor houses of the people, ill-prepared, as is so apt to be the case in hot countries, for cold weather, presented sodden and shivering faces to the gray landscape, wherein rock and ridge and mountain, and the sombre regard of the great Desert, seemed to watch the lowering sky.

Martha, the widow of Simon the Leper, was displeased. Probably the weather contributed to her discomfort; nobody can be irrationally happy with a sky of cold lead and an atmosphere of cold pottages; but Martha did not attribute her discontent to meteorological causes. A man was cause enough. Why muddle the case and chatter of the weather, which anybody had to deal with? Who else had to deal with a brother like hers? To be sure, there was Mary, who went about like a mute at a funeral, and forgot to shake the rugs.

“Besides,” observed Martha abruptly, “thou never seest any fault in Lazarus. No wonder

he thinks he is never to blame, with a woman always at his feet at home. Fortunately for him he has not two to spoil him."

"I am but one, surely," replied Mary, with a dove-like suggestion of saintly sarcasm in her voice, "but I am quite willing that our brother should be sure of me, that I gainsay him not in his comings-in and goings-out. Lazarus hath his own affairs, and if they are not such as he shareth with me, I do but trust him. It is not much to do."

"The hours that man keeps," continued Martha complainingly, "since he came back from Capernaum, are a disgrace to the house of Simon my husband, who never departed from me after the evening meal. For sixteen nights hath Lazarus not come home until such time as I could not keep awake to have speech with him."

"Perhaps," interrupted Mary sweetly, "he did prefer that thou shouldst not take that trouble upon thyself."

"He is none so considerate," replied Martha comfortably, without apprehension of the gentle sting in Mary's demure words. "But last night I did hear him when he got here, for he did stumble over a jar of my preserved figs, and it clattered all over the court like thunder."

That Martha intended no ungentlewomanly expletive, but a simple electrical figure of speech,

was evident by the serious, matter-of-fact expression on her broad, handsome face, with which she proceeded to say : —

“And verily it was an hour after the peal of midnight. I heard the watchman on the Roman citadel call aloud, ‘All’s well!’ at least as long as that before Lazarus showed his face in this respectable court. I would have hastened to have words with him, but he hurried into his own portion of the house, and attended to me not. To-night he is gone again.”

“Whatever be his trouble,” sighed Mary, “it weareth upon him, for he groweth pale and thin as never my eyes beheld my brother. It grieveth me sorely. He eateth not, and I fear me he sleepeth not.”

“Most people can’t sleep unless they be in their beds!” snapped Martha. “Thou mayest be sorry, if thou choosest, Mary. Thou hast the sorrowing nature. But Lazarus maketh *me* downright angry.”

Martha spoke in excellent Aramaic, and the word with which she closed her sentence was the nearest synonym to our own useful but perhaps more modern monosyllable, *mad*.

“Gone again,” as Martha had said, Lazarus surely was. Thus stood the story of this young man’s unprecedented and erratic disappearances from his sister’s respectable home.

After his return from Capernaum, he had spent a few weeks in a mechanical effort to live without Zahara. This was really all that life amounted to. To his business he attended dully: it rolled along like a pebble on a smooth board, a little inclined by long habit. Absence from Zahara had a profound effect upon Lazarus. Most men mope a little under such circumstances. This sensitive and passionate nature despaired. Lazarus was even capable of dying for love's sake. Such things exist, and have always existed. The case was complicated for Lazarus by Zahara's final demand upon him in their stolen interview upon the shore of the lake. "Abandon the Nazarene?" A thousand times a day the intimate friend of Jesus cried, "Impossible!" A thousand times the lover of Zahara temporized, "But how tell her so?" From dark to dawn his nature argued with itself: "He ruleth my soul!" — "She ruleth my heart!" "Unto him is my duty." — "Unto her is my troth." "Him will I never deny." — "From her can I never part." "He is my lord." — "She is my queen." "To him I am loyal." — "To her I am true."

The strength of Lazarus, of which he had once a goodly, manly store, began to decline rapidly. It is just to this tossed and tempted soul to say that, with his force of body, his force

of will began to weaken. This is a common calamity: it is the sorest and saddest feature of physical unfitness, and one that commands, in all ages and in any state of society, the least sympathy.

One day, without a sign of warning, he met her suddenly in a bazaar in Jerusalem.

Her maidens were with her. She and Rebecca were purchasing silk and gold fringes. Her litter waited without. Lazarus, who was trafficking with the owner of the shop over some minor matter of decoration needed in the palace of the Maccabees, turned violently pale. His love rushed upon him, at the sight of her, like a torrent that no man withstandeth. His hands were full of tapestries, and, bending over his purchases, he managed to approach her and to say in a thrilling whisper: —

“*Zahara!*”

“We are returned to the palace,” murmured the lady Zahara, toying leisurely with the purple silk. “Forgettest thou me, Lazarus?”

“If I see thee not, I die!” breathed Lazarus.

Zahara arched the pretty eyebrows which were distractingly distinct above her silver veil.

“Bid thy Rebecca be on watch for my Abraham,” Lazarus continued to say. “I have purposes, and them shall I enforce.”

Zahara drew herself up haughtily; then flut-

tered a little with a throb of feminine respect for this masterful speech. She said nothing; the merchant spoke: —

“Will the most worshipful princess deign to consider the *dyes* used in this silk of purple?”

Lazarus examined his tapestries in palpitating silence. When he raised his head Zahara was drifting to her litter. She did not turn her head. Too swiftly she was gone.

At that moment was born the daring venture which Lazarus and Zahara afterward put into execution with a determination and a recklessness that had effects inconceivable by them upon certain of the chief actors in this tale.

When Lazarus had been employed upon the Temple about a year before, he had been called apart from the workmen to inspect a matter requiring the master's eye. Lazarus was more than a carpenter or a master-builder. He was an intelligent man, with an eye trained to proportions: his was equal to any artisan skill imported by Herod from Greece or Rome. From foundation-stone to marble turret, he was a relentless inspector of work. A column in the inner Temple had departed from the true perpendicular. Its carven base had sensibly shifted, and Lazarus was sent for to inquire the cause and prescribe the remedy. He had been led to a heavy piece of tapestry that ornamented an

alcove in the High priest's vestment-chamber. A door was revealed behind the embroidery, as Lazarus was guided through a passage by a priest of high rank, into the damp darkness of the subterranean chambers below the Temple. Here were the foundation-stones placed by Solomon. Near by was the treasure-chamber, known to but a sacerdotal few, and there was the crumbling masonry for which the skillful eye was searching. Lazarus spent the morning in surveys and calculations; the priest departed, and bade him follow when his work was done. Lazarus had privileges beyond the mechanics. Was he not a Jew among Jews, and a famous Pharisee?

When he started back through the same vaulted passage, his trained eye could not help wandering, by the light of the cedar torch, along the neatly laid blocks of limestone. Just as he was about to emerge, behind the tapestry, he noticed a bar of bronze that projected from a block larger than the rest. He stopped, and musingly pushed and then pulled it. Silently the stone moved out upon a brazen hinge, and the new draught almost extinguished his light. No one was there. He glanced within. Curiosity and youth take no long time to decide. Lazarus bent and entered, and softly closed the secret door behind him. Soon the passage became high enough for him to stand and walk. It was

in excellent condition, and showed signs of frequent use. Down, down it went. The adventurer reflected. Did it lead to Sheol? He heard frequent sounds of rushing water, but the passage was dry. After descending and winding for a time, the avenue began to lead up. The air was fresh and cool. Could it be that it led to the tomb of David? A thousand conjectures arose in the imagination of Lazarus, as he toiled stubbornly up the steep ascent. Soon steps helped him. Then another block of stone barred his way. He had reached the mysterious end. He drew a breath and pushed. The light of the hot sun greeted him. He was in the midst of deep shadows. He looked, and half-grown clusters of grapes smiled at him. With cautious step he parted the twining vines. He looked upon a well-kept terrace. Opposite was the glorious Temple. This was the terrace of Annas the High priest. Above, frowned the palace.

Lazarus examined this strangely protected entrance curiously. He took quick and careful note of its location. He quietly returned, replaced the stone in position, and walked back as swiftly as the unequal way would allow. Once only he stopped: that was when he heard the rushing as of a torrent above him. He did not look up, but only wondered where the water

came from and whither it went. Had Lazarus but raised his hand he could have felt a brazen disc that divides the waters from the passage by no more than the width of a thumb. A hundred cubits' farther ascent, and he cautiously emerged from this impressive corridor. His discovery was undiscovered. He kept his counsel, as the subterranean passage did her own. The secret did not pass his lips, nor did the mystery deeply concern his curiosity. The agitated nature of the times and the autocratic authority of the Sanhedrim left little occasion for wonder at any expedient or subterfuge, light or dark, upon the part of the ecclesiastical princes. Whether this passage had been built for prayer or villainy, for the disposal of burnt-offerings or idolaters, for vigils, fastings, or amours, who could say? Lazarus never knew, and never greatly cared. His discovery occurred to him now with a mental flash and a crash like lightning and thunder. It shot through him there in the bazaar while Zahara was blushing over the purple silk. When his soul started and said, "If I see thee not, I die!" the whole scheme seemed to spring to meet him.

To make the story short, he confided in his fellow Abraham. Zahara trusted Rebecca. The man and the maid met. Abraham revealed the situation. Rebecca bore the tale to her mistress.

Upon the seventh night following the interview in the bazaar, the daring lovers met below ground between the palace and the Temple.

To accomplish this end, it had been necessary for Lazarus to renew work upon the Temple. This he had found little difficulty in doing, for his services were always in demand. It had been less easy to make a job behind the priests' quarters, but this obstacle, too, the young builder had finally conquered. Upon the plea of late and solitary labor performed more skillfully by the master without the men, Lazarus had managed to obtain access at an early hour in the evening, to the subterranean passage, from the Temple entrance. He replaced the stone behind him. The drowsy priests did not notice whether or when the builder left the Temple. Lazarus pushed through with hot haste, and with bounding heart reached the extreme end of the passage and stirred the grass-grown slide, moved it quickly and quietly aside, and stretched out his hand into the grape-vine. This was the signal of meeting. Midway of the vine he grasped the soft fingers of Zahara. Zahara had a spice of the adventuress in her: she liked this daring business; it stirred her soul and body. She darted behind the grape-vine, and allowed her lover to draw her into his forbidding trysting-place without a quaver. Abraham stood

sentry in the dark at the mouth of the passage: Rebecca watched the palace. Lazarus and Zahara were alone. He clasped her in the gloom without a word, and when he had suffocated her with kisses, in silence and darkness, he raised a temple lamp, and stared upon her beauty, like one gone mad with love and joy. Zahara was a little pale, but she shone resplendent in that dreary place.

“Zahara! Brightness! Bright one!” cried Lazarus. “I risk my life for thy lips!”

“And I my liberty for thine,” replied Zahara, with a sweet pride. Then they clasped, and spoke no more for the closeness of their embrace; and that first meeting gave space for little speech or language between them but the language of the lips and arms. They met rapturously and parted soon and safely: Zahara and Rebecca returned together to the palace, while Abraham and Lazarus departed by different ways to their own place. All went as smoothly as a canoe over a torrent. Nothing happened to hinder or alarm the lovers. The escapade was undiscovered and repeated. In fact, it was repeated for many an evening.

These meetings were always necessarily short, but they lengthened insensibly and dangerously. Zahara enjoyed herself supremely, without diverting fears. The girl was born for a wider

life than the poor prison of experience accorded to Oriental maidens. She had possibilities in her which the palace of the High priest recognized no more than the theologians recognized her ecclesiastical capacity to be voted into the Sanhedrim. This adventure delighted her. She waived its dangers away like a queen, and kissed the tenderer for them.

As the two became more accustomed to each other's precious presence, they managed to introduce some articulate communication into the wild scene. In their damp and ghastly rendezvous, with the light of the lover's lamp flaring upon their faces, and their strained ears, grown refined by their new exercise, listening to every sound beyond their own heart-beats, Lazarus and Zahara did the first conversing of their lives.

Zahara returned quickly enough to the subject which had now mounted far beyond their personal case, and had become the main source of excitement, amity, or enmity in Judea,—the career of the Nazarene. Zahara remained firm in her repulsion toward this man, and toward all which he represented in the movements of her times. She had the instinct of the high-born against the low, of culture against rudeness, of the conservative against the progressive, of the Sanhedrim against the dissenter, of ecclesiasti-

cism against religious liberty, of a young and haughty woman against that which she had not been educated to respect. She demanded of Lazarus nothing less than his entire desertion of the dangerous itinerant agitator.

“Have I not done enough that is disloyal for thy sake?” inquired Lazarus mournfully. “For thee, I have not had converse with the man for now longer than I dare reflect upon. Each day I vow unto myself that I will see the face of this Jesus, and pray his forgiveness for ingratitude that the man thou lovest ought to be ashamed of, O my Zahara! Each night I kiss thee, and I behold him not.”

“That is all very well as far as it goes,” replied Zahara, with a little feminine self-satisfaction at her conquest of her lover, “but that is not enough. I like not to see thee the dupe of such pretenders. Thou art not like low-born men, deceived by sorcerer’s antics, as children and old women.”

In vain did Lazarus reason with Zahara touching the true nature and achievements of his friend. When he spoke of the modesty, the sincerity, the tenderness, the exquisite sympathy, the godlike unselfishness, of the man, Zahara stopped his lips with a kiss; and when he related the marvels wrought by the Rabbi, Zahara arched her pretty brows. When he

urged his thrilling neighborhood histories of the sick girl and the blind man, Zahara said cures were common things. When he insisted upon her own personal indebtedness to the saviour of her life at Lake Gennesaret, Zahara smiled in a chilly, well-bred way, strongly suggestive of her father, except that her expression was so thoroughly ladylike.

“What wilt thou?” cried Lazarus in despair, one night. “What wilt thou, then? Is there any test which thou *wilt* take of the honor of my words, or of the sanity of my judgment, or of the wondrous power and character of him whom thou despisest and I revere, whom thou scornest and I obey? Our hearts are one, Zahara. Our minds should not be twain. Thy pertinacity grieveth me for love’s sake. Tell me, then, what proof wilt thou take, of him or of me, that thou shalt consider the claims of this holy and self-forgetful man?”

“When with mine own eyes I behold him give life unto the dead, O my lover, I will consider,” laughed Zahara lightly.

“Thou imperious Zahara!” groaned Lazarus. “Thou demandest the impossible of nature and the Nazarene.”

Their lamp went out this moment, and Zahara clung to him in a pretty fright. In the dark his lips felt for hers, and he said no more about the Rabbi.

Before he lifted his face, a low voice without upon the terrace called him urgently. It was Abraham the slave.

“Rebecca warneth me,” whispered Abraham. “The High priest in the palace calleth for the lady Zahara.”

The trembling lovers pushed aside the grass-grown slide, and boldly ventured out. Lazarus drew Zahara into the open air, — it was raining violently, — and they stood for an instant with held breath, palpitating behind the shield of vines. Quivering, they listened and stared for sound or signal which should decide the nature and extent of their danger.

CHAPTER XIX.

THERE was merriment in the house of Malachi. The people of Bethany were once again wending their ways to his now notorious door, ready to forget a scandal for a feast, and to forgive an unpleasant reputation for a frolic. The neighbors collected one bright winter day, and salaamed across the Pharisee's threshold politely in gala clothes. The occasion was no less than the marriage of his daughter.

It was a question of much local interest when or how Ariella and Baruch had effected the preliminaries to this event. Their betrothal, which was a solemn affair, according to the customs of their people, had taken place scarcely six weeks before the marriage day. Malachi had surrendered to the situation after the hardest struggle; but he had surrendered thoroughly. Malachi was a shrewd fellow, who took no long time to perceive the pit of unpopularity into which he had dropped. Something must be done to retrieve himself among his neighbors and acquaintances. Why, his very rentals had begun to decline! Gossip gave him the name of a hard

man, and tenants were afraid of him. This would clearly never do. Malachi consulted what he called his own soul, kept his counsel, confided in nobody, admitted nothing, but against the growing intimacy of his daughter and Baruch, to the amazement of Hagar, he offered no protest. In fact, he seemed to see or know as little as possible of the love affair, treating it with a cold indifference which would have wounded to the quick a daughter whose affection he had ever chosen to cultivate. When Hagar timidly announced, one night, that Baruch had formally made request for the hand of Ariella, her father scornfully replied : —

“The girl is naught but a nuisance about the house since all this sorcerer’s business hath set her against her own flesh and blood. Let her marry the beggar, if she will. I shall be only too glad to be rid of her.”

It was more difficult to say when the lovers themselves had reached the definite mile-stone of marriage in their vague and somewhat aerial courtship. Tormenting and blessing each other by turns of devotion and withdrawal, they had at last come to the limit of a kind of spiritual caprice, — who could tell how? They themselves, perhaps, least of all. Fate had led them by strange ways into the common human circumstance of fortunate love. Marriage, for so

long the impossible, nay, the inconceivable, in their afflicted lives, was the last thing to make itself practicable; the last, perhaps, to make itself necessary to their new and happy lot. The possession of the simplest human faculties, the unregarded preciousness of sight, the unestimated mercy of the power of locomotion, treasure so usual that other loving men and women noted it not, — this was paradise enough at first for Baruch and for Ariella.

The thrill of health, the delirium of vision, the late sweet consciousness of having become like others of God's creatures, here was the fruit upon the tree of life. Slowly they came to the knowledge of the good and the evil in unshared experience. They arrived at the necessity of uniting their blessedness by those almost unapparent stages which sometimes make the period of courtship as delicate and as fair as the prism in an opal, and sometimes set it with sharp pangs and perils that go too far to destroy its delight.

At any rate, however they did it, they came to the old familiar turn in the winding road of love; and, insensibly as one foot follows another in a long march, they passed with extraordinary sensitiveness into ordinary happiness.

The wedding of Ariella was a great event in the hamlet of Bethany. Her father unexpect-

edly developed a stubborn vanity in the matter, and insisted on as much show as possible ; partly, Hagar suspected, as a taunt to the poverty of the bridegroom, who naturally, poor fellow, had not yet so much as a trade to show for himself, though he had prospective opportunities to acquire the delicate handicraft of constructing musical instruments, for which both his taste and his refined fingers were well adapted. But at all events Ariella was ceremoniously married.

The girl bore herself through the gayeties of the evening like a white flower, still and sweet. There was something singular about her beauty, which seemed less bridal than celestial to look upon. The rudest eye regarded the pale, slight, serious bride with reverence ; and the rudest tongue, which, alas ! sometimes gave itself freedom at the weddings of these times, was bridled before her.

“ Verily,” said Martha, the widow of Simon the Leper, “ the marriage of those twain is like unto the marriage of two ghosts. This wedding seemeth to me like the rising from the dead.”

“ It seemeth to me as happy as a resurrection,” said Mary, smiling, “ if that be the meaning of thy thought.”

The pleasant tumult, the laughter and jesting, song, music, dance, and feasting, circled about

Baruch like the movement of fays, or beautiful witches, or beings of another race. He found it confusing to become akin to his kind by all this commonplace festivity. It made him silent, like a spectator. Yet perhaps Baruch liked it all well enough, in his own way. The goodliest saint has a throb of pleasure in finding himself forced to share in human merriment like other people. Baruch looked on with a remote smile. He heard the quick, soft breath of Ariella. He took her by the hand, before all the world ; he gazed upon her spiritual beauty, intoxicated. What eye that was *used* to seeing could look upon a bride like that ?

As one stirreth in a vision, Baruch led her from her father's house. The procession formed in swift, bright links to bear her away. The home of his mother would receive the bridegroom and bride. Chaplets of myrtle crowned the heads of the bridal party. All the flowers that the season yielded were showered before their happy feet. Perfumes filled the air. Timbrels sounded shrilly. Sweet singers chanted love-songs. The light-bearers bore brazen and carven lamps, filled with scented oil and fastened to the tops of poles. These flickered gently upon laughing faces, and rich robes, and the wavering outline of dancing figures.

“Impossible,” thought Ariella, “that this

bride is I." It seemed to her every moment as if she should make a misstep, stumble, and fall back upon that bed of misery, that nine years' old grave, and lie there helpless, hopeless, aching, and start and sob because she had waked out of such a pretty dream.

"Incredible," said Baruch, "that this enraptured man is I." He looked at Ariella. Her long fair hair flowed like sunlight down her shoulders; it rippled in the light breeze like a brook. Her veil was of silver-white tissue, half-transparent and shining. Her delicate throat was visible. A chain of gold encircled it. The chain stirred with the heaving of her breast. Her hands and white arms trembled. Baruch said to himself: —

"I shall turn my head, and darkness will blot it all out. The vision will shatter before me. I shall strain my sightless eyeballs till they burn into my brain. I shall move in blackness. I shall be guided of a lad upon a solitary way."

But when he saw the lad Enoch verily standing upon his valuable head, in a prominent place at the front of the procession, and wearing his chaplet of myrtle upon one wagging foot, Baruch concluded that his situation possessed the elements of reality. He recovered himself, and crushed the hand of Ariella, like any common bridegroom, and was only uncommon in this,

that he blessed God because of his earthly joy, and remembered that it was of heaven.

In the bliss of Ariella and Baruch there was one sturdy disappointment. First in their thought had been the great Benefactor of their afflicted and blessed lives. To welcome him among the marriage guests would have added the last throb to delight, and the last solemnity to the sacredness of the hour. His benediction would have brought their joy to its highest and most solemn level. The Rabbi might even have married them, Ariella thought; but the Rabbi was not to be found. He was traveling in distant villages, followed by blessing and malediction, by trust and suspicion, by adoration and enmity, by a few faithful friends and by a fickle crowd; by the scorn of the socially influential, the espionage and hatred of ecclesiastics; by the loving tears and smiles of the poor, the sick, the crippled, unlucky, unhappy; by the outcast, erring, and despised of men.

The Rabbi was about what he called his Father's business. These were strange words to the followers who so blindly loved, but so darkly comprehended, that mystical life. Perhaps few were constituted so as to have understood them better than these two young people, whose experience of suffering had refined both the imagination and the spiritual vision necessary to the

case. Yet their conception of it was vague and poor enough. As one looks back upon that sublime history, the most touching thing about it seems to be the heart-breaking solitariness of the man, whose nearest friend could not apprehend his simplest motive.

His motive for not appearing at the marriage festivity of Ariella and Baruch was probably a complex one. For one thing, the excitement caused by these two memorable cures was enormous. Jerusalem felt it, and Bethany thrilled with it. A hint of the probable presence of the Healer would have turned the village into a camp, and the bridal party into the centre of a mob. True, it might have been a mob of respectable intentions enough, but every poor wretch within call would have swelled it; cripples and lepers crawled in the bridal train of Ariella; and as to Jesus himself, who could say what would have been done unto him by the clamorous people? They were capable of snatching him to death or to a throne.

As the marriage train approached the house of the bridegroom, a traveler, coming from the direction of Jerusalem, observed it at a distance, and stopped suddenly. It was the beautiful custom of the Jews that whoever met the bridal or the burial party should turn his steps and follow it. Etiquette required this courteous act

of every stranger no less than any friend. He who stood watching the bridal procession of Ariella and Baruch was a grave and weary man, with the aspect of one who had traveled far and needed rest. He had a certain homeless look, pathetic to see, which showed itself in his very attitude, and the slow, sad motion of the head with which he turned to view the happy scene. His first purpose seemed to be to shrink from it, step into the shadow of trees by the roadside, and there remain concealed. This he did for such space of time as the procession required to pass him. No person observed him. When the bridal train had swept by the man stepped forth and followed it. He walked at a little distance, slowly, almost shyly, making no sign of his presence. This man was the Nazarene. When Ariella put her foot across the threshold of her husband's house, he stood still, and extended his hands in silent benediction. Having given this mute and beautiful expression of his sympathy with the happiest marriage that Judea had known for many a year, he returned as he had come, and no man had knowledge of his presence.

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When Lazarus and Zahara came forth from the subterranean passage at the alarm of the slave, no person but Abraham was found to be

in sight. Lazarus deftly and swiftly replaced the slide, and drew the thick grape-vine closer to it. The night was very dark. The rain beat against the vine, and dropped heavily from leaf to leaf upon the trembling form of Zahara, who shrank within the frail shelter, not daring to venture she knew not what. Lazarus, having exchanged a few whispered words with Abraham, said abruptly: —

“Zahara, my own, there is no gainsaying the matter, — we must part, and that at once. One kiss, my love, one more — one more — one more. Now return thou to the palace of thy father with all speed. Rebecca awaits thee at the upper terrace. I go, but I go not too far to watch for thy safety, and see that thou makest thy way to thy handmaiden unmolested.”

They clung, and parted. Each felt what neither dared to say, that this might be their last meeting. They clasped and sobbed, and turned their faces from each other, and went their ways. Lazarus and Abraham ran along the terrace, keeping close in the shadow till they were beyond immediate danger of detection. Then dismissing the slave to the highway, Lazarus concealed himself in some shrubbery, and watched the palace and its spacious grounds.

At first he could see nothing, it was so dark and the storm beat so in his face. Suddenly, a

light flashed, and went out. It was a single torch, extinguished by a quick order ; but the momentary gleam had revealed the figure of the High priest, followed by a guard. Annas was searching the grounds.

From his hiding-place Lazarus could hear occasional voices, but no words. Nothing was to be seen or heard of Zahara. Lazarus suffered torments of anxiety.

Presently, the sound of quick, light feet ran across the wet terrace. A woman's garments fluttered in the storm. The shrill voice of Rebecca called to the High priest : —

“ My lord, I bear thee good tidings. I have found my mistress the lady Zahara. She sleepeth soundly on a cushion in the inner chamber of the women's apartments. She hath so hidden herself behind a curtain that I did overlook her. I pray thee pardon me, my lord, and hasten to her, for she waketh, and awaiteth thy commands.”

The torch flared out again. The High priest and his guard, none too amiably, patrolled the grounds and returned to the palace. Lazarus fancied that they lingered at the mouth of the underground passage too long ; but he dared not stay to decide this point. He made his own escape (in the darkness this was not a matter of difficulty), and gained the public road unob-

served ; and so, across the valley and the mountain, drenched and dreary, he reached home and drew breath.

Danger for the present was over. But the result of this alarm was serious enough. Lazarus dared not, for Zahara's sake, repeat their audacious meetings, until all suspicion, if any existed, were worn from the mind of the High priest by time. The lovers were now entirely separated. Beyond an occasional message ventured through their confidential slaves, they had no communication. Winter set in. Zahara remained, or was retained, closely in the palace of her father. It seemed to Lazarus that death could not be worse than this. He grew ghastly.

One day he sent her a scroll, on which was inscribed : —

“ If I have thee not, I die.”

Zahara responded by a piece of papyrus, on which was written, “ Live thou for Zahara.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE winter was nearly over. About that time in the year which corresponds to the first week of the month of February, as known to our calendar, the underground corridor between the Temple and the palace of Annas became the stage of a thrilling scene.

The impatience of the separated lovers had now silenced the warnings of prudence. Lazarus and Zahara had agreed to meet at the old rendezvous ; Abraham and Rebecca, faithful tools of the adventure, and the only medium of communication, had done their docile and sympathetic part in the affair. The evening and the hour had arrived.

Lazarus found both more difficulty and more ease than he had anticipated, in approaching the corridor from the Temple. Priests were abundant and attentive. The builder was obliged to watch his chance by the wariest. It even occurred to him that his motions were observed by special order ; but he abandoned this theory when a sleek young Levite, with whom he was conversing, deliberately interrupted the inter-

view, and, begging his pardon for leaving him for a moment, moved off to obey some summons from the altar, promising to return immediately. It is needless to say that when the Levite came back Lazarus had disappeared.

If the priest had looked at the tapestry which hung before the marble slab that closed the corridor, he might have seen the fine material tremble slightly, as a thing does which has recently been set in motion. Whether he cast an eye in that direction or not, however, Lazarus was not there to see.

He reached the extreme end of the passage something past the hour appointed. It was empty and still. He pushed the great slide softly. It was a cold night, and fortunately dark, but without rain; there was frost upon the grape-vine, which hung with shriveled leaves, a scantier shield than it used to be. Lazarus dared not speak: he listened in an agony which mounted to ecstasy when he heard the delicate, quick fluctuations of a woman's panting breath. Two passionate whispers crossed each other.

“*Zahara!*”

“*Lazarus!*” and he had her in his hungry arms.

Of what do lovers talk after a three months' separation, and in face of detection, disgrace, and death? At first it seemed to Lazarus that

words were as idle as the dripping of the dew from the dank roof of the vault. It was frosty, by the way, for so much dew, and it occurred to him once to wonder where it came from; but neither this nor any other coherent thought had, for some time, any distinct lodgment in his mind. His lips groped in the dark for her eyes and mouth and soft cheek. Her sweet breath mingled with his own. He had not dared bring a lamp into the passage this time, and the lovers put up their hands and felt for and felt over each other's features, like blind people.

"It is like meeting in the tomb," said Lazarus, with a sudden shudder.

"Thy cheek hath grown thin, my dear lord," whispered Zahara mournfully. "It is hollow beneath my finger-tip. Thou palest; thou weakenest; thou diest."

"Better death than life without thee, Zahara," replied her lover hopelessly.

"Nay, then, my love, thou lovest courage and the heart of a man. Have cheer, my own. Take it, from my lips!"

She lifted her warm face.

"Thy kiss would give a man life though he did lie in the sepulchre!" breathed Lazarus, in a different tone. "Now, by the memory of Eden and the love of our first parents, Zahara,

I will not die for thee, neither will I live without thee, but I *will* have thee to wife ! ”

“ But how ? ” asked Zahara, with a sweet timidity. She had no faith in the possibilities of the situation, but she liked her lover’s willful words. Less princess, now, and all woman, she gainsaid him not, but clung to him and trembled silently.

“ There is but one way, Zahara,” cried Lazarus vehemently ; “ I know none other, and thou must take it if thou lovest me as woman loves who will wed and obey her lord. Thou must leave all and follow me.”

“ But whither ? ” demanded Zahara characteristically. Zahara was very much in love, but she had the calculating temperament. She did not plunge headlong even into delight. She might have made a very good Arab, but she had been a princess too long. She temporized, and reasoned, and objected, even while she clung to her lover cheek to cheek, with soft arms about his neck.

“ Break loose from it all ! ” entreated Lazarus. — “ Thy palace, thy father, thy past, thy world ! Let it go, Zahara, for love’s sake ! Enter thou mine ! Accept thou the life of thy husband and thy worshiper ! ”

“ Tell me, then — what life ? How do we manage ? What dost thou mean ? ” persisted Zahara.

“Yield these accursed beliefs and follies that separate us!” demanded Lazarus more imperiously. “Come thou bravely unto me, and say unto the world, ‘I follow the faith of my husband.’ Let us away from the whole barking crowd, priests, temple, people. Let us choose the better faith, the simpler life. Let us join the career of the best and noblest man in all Judea, and go forth from this place, as his disciples go, respected and free, into other lands” —

“I do not understand thee,” interrupted Zahara, shrinking a little from Lazarus.

“O my love, play not with me,” pleaded Lazarus. “I do but speak plainly. I see no other road to happiness for thee and me. Remain thou in the world of thy father the High priest, and of the Temple, and of the Sanhedrim, and of the rank and the faith to which thou art born, and thou canst no more be mine than the sun in mid-heaven, and that thou knowest well. As we meet here, beneath the surface of the sweet earth, at peril of thy good name and my poor life, so must our love crawl underground, a dark and deadly corridor in which two souls shall grope and stifle unto death. Break thou forth right bravely; be thou most womanly, Zahara, and choose the path that thy lord’s feet must tread. I have worldly goods; thou canst not suffer at my hands for the daily

needs of thy delicate life. Follow me, Zahara ! Follow me among the people who will reverence thee, and me, and the love we bear each other. Follow me to a new life, — new hopes, new faith, new deeds, new joy.”

“ And call the Nazarene my Master ? ” asked Zahara, in a cutting tone. Her arms dropped from the neck of her lover. She turned coldly. He could feel her pliant figure grow rigid and straighten haughtily.

Suddenly she trembled, all her muscles relaxed, and she began to sob.

At this moment an ominous sound reached the ears of the absorbed and distressed lovers. It was not the falling of the drops from the roof of the vault ; it was not the flitting of a stray bat nor the rustle of any creature of the darkness, companion of their hiding-place. It was the stealthy groping of a human hand. The slide which closed the mouth of the passage stirred from the outside.

“ Hide thee, hide thee, Zahara ! ” commanded Lazarus, in the hissing whisper of agony. “ Fly thou down the corridor, where ’t is darkest to the eye. When the light enters, keep thou me in sight, but stay thyself beyond it. Farewell, and God keep thee ! ”

A little to his surprise, for there was no counting upon Zahara, the girl obeyed him ; with one

swift penitent kiss she darted and fled as he had bidden.

Lazarus stood still in his place, and watched the slide open. He was unarmed. He could only meet his fate, — like a woman, he thought, or a coward. The slide moved cautiously. The faint starlight fell in, the night air rushed, the leaves of the grape-vine rustled crisply. A figure, like the figure of a guardsman, knelt between the vine and the passage, peering in. Behind this appeared a form resembling that of the young Levite who was called away so opportunely in the Temple. Lazarus made no motion. The figures retreated ; voices consulted in whispers ; feet crushed the vines.

A torch flared, and the High priest, tall and awful, towered against the light. Lazarus had not abandoned his position near the entrance. He had made up his mind to face alone whatever happened. Annas and Lazarus looked each other silently in the eye. Both men were deadly pale, one from rage, and one from mortal peril. Both were perfectly self-possessed.

The High priest spoke first : —

“I pray your pardon, sir builder, but may I be so bold as to inquire your errand in a spot sacred to the temple of Jehovah and the service of His ministers? It must needs be an important one that finds an honorable man, such as

yourself, sneaking like an assassin upon privacy which a son of the desert would respect."

"My errand is without dishonor," answered Lazarus composedly. "It is needless for me to explain it. My word would scarcely have value for you under these circumstances."

"Possibly not," returned Annas, with a sneer. "But is this all you have to say for yourself?"

"I pray," urged Lazarus, with a change in his tone, which suddenly broke into an agonized appeal, "I pray, for the most sacred of reasons, which would be urgently appreciated by yourself did you comprehend them, — I pray you to allow me to depart in peace until I reach the Temple exit. I give you my word that I will return again unto you and meet your demands, if you will allow me to do so without the scandal of interference."

"The honor of a skulking man is a poor guaranty," replied the High priest frigidly. "You will not experience surprise if I decline your request."

"I am in your power," answered Lazarus, bowing drearily. He listened with held breath, fearing some betrayal of her presence on the part of Zahara. She gave no sign. The black throat of the corridor yawned silently beyond the line of lessening light where the flare of the torch died.

“I am in your power,” repeated Lazarus.

“Which I propose to exercise,” said the High priest coldly. “Guards! advance! Whatever be your business, my ex-builder, it is one which deserves the punishment it shall receive. Think you,” exploded Annas, suddenly casting off the disguise of icy self-command which he had chosen to assume, — “think you, Lazarus, that I know not the true nature of your abominable business? Think you that I have been a gullible, easy old man, blind to the honor of my household, and negligent to the virtue of my daughter? That I have not penetrated your scandalous design? That I had not the intelligence to discover that the sacred, secret avenues of the Temple were converted into the scene of a low love affair? Think you that I do not recognize in you, you dog of a Pharisee, the seducer of the daughter of the High priest of Zion?”

“Now, by the great name of Jehovah, revered by Sadducee and Pharisee, by priest and layman,” cried Lazarus passionately, “and by the honor of a lady, the noblest, the purest, the whitest, the most sacred in the land of our people, I swear that the character of this lady shall be protected! I call you to witness, ye guards of the High priest, that I summon to the death, though I am a man unarmed, him who has ut-

tered these base words against the fair name of Zahara ! ”

With this, maddened by very helplessness and blind with rage, Lazarus sprang (as young blood will) desperately and hopelessly upon his tormentor. A cold laugh replied to his futile and foolish movement. There was a low command, a swift movement, a grating sound, and Lazarus bounded against the solid slide, which closed violently in his face. A few dull strokes, followed by resounding blows, and Lazarus realized to his horror that the exit from the corridor was forcibly shut, and that he and Zahara were barred in.

Lazarus gave a mighty push against the inert stone. He tugged with ferocious tenacity at the brazen ring. He listened with ear against the clammy slab. Footsteps deadened to his hearing. A low, jeering laugh echoed in the distance, and Lazarus was left alone. No, not alone !

“Zahara !” he cried in anguish. “Zahara !”

There was no reply.

“God of my fathers ! Where art thou, O my love ?” He groped with hands and feet along the black shaft. In its steep descent he stumbled. His fingers touched the hem of a dress. With delicate reverence his hand sought her face.

“Zahara, my love ! I am here. I am thy Lazarus. Thou art not dead. Would that thou hadst never seen my face ! Then wouldst thou be safe in thy father’s house.” Never before had Lazarus reproached himself for the love he had inspired in this proud girl. Zahara still stood. Her two hands supported her. Their palms were turned backward, each upon the damp, uneven stones. Lazarus took one and kissed it and warmed it on his breast. Then the girl sighed deeply, and said in an imperious and happy tone : —

“Here, Rebecca. Hurry, my girl. Bring my sweetmeats and my bracelets, my handglass and mine ointments. I will dress me in my splendor, for Herod supbeth with us to-night.”

“Jehovah guide me !” groaned Lazarus. “Her reason hath fled from her.”

He dared not touch the lips of the half-delirious girl. Zahara had a courageous nature ; but no woman delicately reared in gold and purple can bear such a situation as this unmoved. The horrible darkness, the deadly dampness, the peril to life and lover, the terrible words of her father, had mounted to her brain like a deadly drug. But Lazarus knew too well that he had no time to lose in the tenderness of anxiety. His only hope now lay in forcing an exit through the Temple, blinding or bribing the priests, and con-

juring Zahara somehow to safety in the outer world. Without delaying to restore the girl, he snatched her and dragged her through the shaft. in the direction of the Temple, making such speed with his precious burden as he miserably could. In the necessary roughness of the mad and desperate rush, Zahara's wits began to clarify. The descent had now become perilous. She spoke confusedly : —

“Where are we, Lazarus? This is not the tomb?”

“No, sweetheart, follow me. There, take my hand. The way is slippery. Take care. We rush to the Temple. Perchance at the horns of the altar none dare molest us.”

“But I hear the rushing of waters. Is it the river of death?”

“Thou hearest naught,” said Lazarus. “This horror ringeth in thine ears.”

The descent became steeper. The limestone steps grew more slippery. At any time it was exhausting to Lazarus to run the passage. He had often fallen heavily. His hands and knees bore many a scar. Just where that hidden way was about to descend under the Valley of the Cheesemongers (for thus deeply was the passage excavated in the limestone valley in order to mount to the Temple on the other side), Zahara stopped, clutched Lazarus, and said : —

“Hearest thou not the rushing now? We are coming upon the waters.”

But Lazarus, who had often heard this sound as of a torrent, said again: —

“It is naught, dearest. The waters are above. Thou shalt come to the Temple dry shod. Keep up thy strength, and despair not.”

He had no time to comfort her as his heart would. He felt a dumb fear lest the other stone door were barred, too. He redoubled his pace, and Zahara followed downward. At this moment his foot splashed sandal-deep in water. He stopped. They listened: he stood with his arm protectingly over her shoulder, she with her head upon his heart. The maiden's ears had not been deceived. The murmuring of dashing water was now clearly distinguishable. Lazarus thought that they were within twenty feet of the bottom of the descent. They were beneath the Tyropœon Valley. He fancied he could hear the breathing of the city as it slept. He could not believe that it was water at his feet. He stooped, and fell backward as he did so. He touched and tasted. “It is icy as the snows of Lebanon,” he murmured to himself.

“What is it?” asked Zahara. “Why go we not on? It is cold, and I am tired. Is it much farther to the Temple?”

A low, gurgling noise was now heard. It

seemed to come from the ascent ahead of them. Zahara gave a little cry.

“Water!” she cried. “I feel it in front of me. I touch it.” Lazarus could not answer. The horror of the situation completely unmanned him. He stooped again, and his hands followed those of Zahara, and groped down the descent. The tips of their fingers, their hands, their wrists, were enveloped in a pool of cold water. The depth at their feet increased rapidly. Lazarus lost his head, bade Zahara stand still, and madly plunged down. He slipped. He was waist deep, shoulder deep, before he knew it. The water chilled him to the marrow, and dragged him down. It now flashed upon him for the first time that this was a part of the High priest’s diabolical plot to murder them. He called, “Zahara, I drown! Help me!” and made a mighty effort to regain his footing. The girl in the meantime had unwound her brilliant Damascus shawl, which was fully eight feet long. She had retreated so that the flood only bathed her feet.

“I throw my shawl to thee, Lazarus, my love!” cried Zahara. “Seize it, and thou art safe!”

Lazarus felt the drapery touch the water beside him. He said nothing, but concentrated his weakened body upon the effort to reach the shawl. Zahara pulled as she never could have

done before love armed her muscle. Lazarus was soon at her feet. She caught him by the arm. Hers was the clear brain now, and the strong body. Lazarus was an exhausted man.

"We must away and back, or the flood will overwhelm us," she cried authoritatively.

The waters bubbled beneath them like an infernal spring. The torrent chased them and licked their feet. The slippery limestone betrayed their footing, and they fell. Then they crawled upon their hands and knees. They struggled to their feet and feebly ran, and gained a distance hand in hand. Now they stopped, and heard the waters gurgling below, behind them. Then, despairingly, they climbed again. The cataract dashed against them in the darkness. They could but cling, and when they stopped they kissed. They could not speak. Now Lazarus began to grow weaker. Zahara took him by one hand and dragged, and then by both hands, while she struggled up the ascent, sitting on each step, to get a better chance to pull her lover. As she did so, the water hissed and swirled and caught them. There was a roar above. It was the echo of the waters below. Now Zahara panted. Her heart gave way. Then the stairs on which she was crawling ceased, and there was a level walk for a few feet. Lazarus recovered breath. They staggered and

ran, if such feeble steps could be called running. The reverberation in the tunnel increased. They heard the waters ripple upon the floor of the passage. Another ascent came. There were no steps. The water poured upon them. It was so steep and slippery that they could not make headway. Zahara led the way. Beaten back, they stopped for breath and courage. The respite was too much for Lazarus. He fainted. Zahara supported him until the weight proved too heavy for her strength; then let him sink toward the torrent; she fell down beside him, and drew his head upon her bosom. She thought him dead. She knew her own end would come soon. She heard the profluence of waters with a kind of large indifference. How long would it take until the pool of death overwhelmed her? What cared she? She would die like a queen, for her king was there. The flood arose. Her waist was submerged. She lifted her lover's face higher toward her own. She was ready for the last kiss.

CHAPTER XXI.

FACE to face with a hideous death, Zahara's mind made a sudden bound into a train of thought quite foreign to her.

"Here is a chance for that Nazarene fellow. If he were what Lazarus thinketh him, I would that he were here to experiment on our calamity." At this moment the lips of Lazarus moved, and the fainting man muttered something with agonized indistinctness. Zahara bent, desperately trying to hear what he said, — to catch his last dear word. The water had reached his throat; she tried to raise his head a little higher on her breast; her own form rocked in the rising torrent; as she stooped, the water poured into her mouth, and she gasped with the cold shock. The head of her lover drooped, and fell.

"Master!" murmured the drowning man. "Lord, forgive me, for I loved thee all the while."

"Lazarus!" called Zahara, with a piercing cry, "arouse thee! *The water recedeth!*" As she spoke these words the current sunk sud-

denly; it made a strong sucking sound, as if the water were drawn off by some powerful agency, and whirled away into the darkness of an unknown pit. A torch flared, and light filled the ghastly death-trap, out of which she looked up, trembling, to see the haggard countenance of the High priest her father.

The facts of the situation were covered by a few words. Rebecca the slave had been devoured by agony and indecision. Between distress for her mistress and terror for herself, the girl's tongue had halted a little too long. Who could blame her? Death was an easy penalty to inflict upon a disobedient servant in those dark days; power like that of Annas was royal. A girl's life would have gone out at the beck of his ringed finger, and who would have given it a thought? Rebecca, in short, was afraid to "tell." It was not until a guardsman brought her the terrible report that the High priest, for vengeance on his daughter's lover, had turned the waters of the Temple cistern loose into the shaft that Rebecca fled shrieking to Annas, flinging the words into his cold ears: —

"Thy daughter, my mistress, the lady Zahara, perisheth with Lazarus!"

Cursing the girl with every anathema that agony and the ecclesiastical mind suggested, the

wretched father ran to the rescue of his murdered child. The young Levite was dispatched upon the wings of the wind to turn the waters from the vault, by the secret process known only to the Temple and the priesthood. But this, alas! took time, — and time there was none to spare. Annas flung open the slide behind the grape-vine, sick with terror, fully prepared to find that before the waters could be drawn off, Zahara, the princess of the most distinguished priestly house of that age, would have been drowned by the hand of her own father, like vermin in a crack.

The discovery that the torrent had already been drawn from the tunnel stupefied Annas. For the moment, the question, *Who did it?* shot through his mind with a force that deadened his emotion at the sight of his daughter's living face. At first he did not speak to the poor girl, who crawled to meet him, dragging her unconscious lover in her arms. Had Lazarus learned the secret of brazen screws and hidden springs and dark mysteries known only to the altar and the sacred craft? The High priest flung a glance of scowling hate at the prostrate man. But this one was enough. That limp, helpless figure, that ghastly face, those lifeless arms? Plainly these had never performed the subtle and perilous feat. Clearly,

it was almost, if not altogether, a drowned man who lay so piteously at the priest's feet. The countenance of Annas now expressed the acutest confusion. *Then who did it?*

"Father!" moaned Zahara. "Father, we perish! Save us, if thou lovest me!"

The High priest made no reply. He stepped from the vault scornfully, and slowly turned his back.

"Father!" cried Zahara, "*dear father!*" The girl abased herself, falling to her face upon the clammy stone; she caught at the hem of the priestly garment, and kissed it. Then the High priest averted his face, and spoke:—

"Thee I save. Thou art the daughter of my house, and the child of my loins. Death thou deservest, for thou hast brought disgrace upon the name of Annas. But thee I save. Follow me from this place of shame. Him who hath wrought us this scandal I save not. Leave him to his fate, and attend my will."

"Nay, then!" cried Zahara proudly, "if thou leavest my beloved, thou leavest me. I stir not from this living tomb without him."

She clasped the unconscious man the closer in her arms, and obstinately seated herself on the wet limestone, as if she intended to remain there. Lazarus had now partially regained consciousness, but not to such an extent as to recognize the facts of the situation.

His heavy head stirred upon the girl's breast ; his hand sought hers ; delicately he lifted it to his cold lips, and laid it down.

"Zahara !" he murmured, "we die together. Thou art a holy woman. Pray thou for my spirit."

There was something in the reverence of these words and of the unconscious man's refined caress which impressed the High priest in spite of himself. Those were rude times, and love took rude forms among the highest of men and women. The suspicions of the incensed father were fully justifiable ; but had he here the signs of a coarse amour ? Annas hesitated with himself for a perceptible instant, before he spoke again. Zahara made the most of the instant ; she clasped his knees, and clung to him, and made entreaty of him that would have moved a worse father than the High priest to something like relenting.

"Let us from this ghastly place !" cried Zahara. "As thou art a man, and a priest, and a father, let us out into God's air ! He dieth here within mine arms, — Lazarus dieth in this dungeon. Let us forth, O my father, for I go not forth without him, though I perish."

"Girl, thou goest as I will," replied the High priest icily. "Guards, take the lady thy mistress. Deal with her gently, but if she follow

not without force, force be it. Return Zahara to the palace of her father."

Now, for the first time in all the cruel story of that night, Zahara shrieked; and a goodly feminine shriek it was. The girl clasped her two beautiful arms stoutly about her lover, and sat like a sphinx, as if she were carved from the limestone vault. Cry after cry rang from her lips, like the appeals of a dying woman. Rebecca, hearing piercing sounds, started the rumor that her mistress was about to be murdered, and in a moment half the slaves and officers of the palace were rushing to the scene. The scandal was becoming too public and too serious to be subdued. Annas uttered a holy oath and turned upon his heel.

"Out with the dog of a Pharisee, then! Throw him over the palace-wall into the highway, and leave him to his fate. Take the lady Zahara to her own apartments, and be done with the abominable business, and hold ye your tongues about it, or I tear them by the roots!"

This order was quickly and deftly obeyed. Lazarus and Zahara were literally torn apart, and thrust, the one, unconscious, into the highway; the other, pleading and weeping, toward the palace. The slaves scattered, terrified. The guards followed the miserable princess. The High priest and the young Levite were left alone.

"Thou hast been to the Temple and returned?" inquired Annas. "And hast done the deed that I commanded?"

"The deed was done," replied the Levite. "When I reached the Temple, lo, the waters had been turned off from the hidden passage into the pools before me. Likewise, some power had evidently opened the secret conduit from the bottom of the passage into the Tyropœon sewer, for the flood receded with strange swiftness even as I whirled my torch and looked."

"Mysterious!" muttered Annas. "I understand not the matter. No underling now serving in the Temple knoweth the secret of the conduits. Who hath handled them?"

"There is a tale that goeth among the priests," suggested the Levite timidly. "I scarcely know whether to bear it unto thee. But I did find a curious rumor stirring in the Temple."

"I demand the whole of it!" cried Annas imperiously. "Tell me all they chattered of, and instantly!"

"It was said," returned the Levite, hesitating—

"By the God of our fathers! the priests prated of a miracle, and mentioned that Nazarene adventurer!"

"But that, we know, is impossible," added

the Levite soothingly, "for the fellow is traveling and preaching somewhere, yonder beyond Jordan, I have heard the rabble say; at all events, he is not in Jerusalem."

The High priest made no reply.

Toward the middle watch of that night, Abraham the servant of Lazarus, having been dispatched by the anxiety of Mary in search of her brother, stumbled upon the exhausted man, lying helpless at the roadside in a dark spot in the shadow of a tower, wherein it so befell that no person had discovered him, either to molest or relieve. Lazarus had partially recovered his consciousness; but his mind wandered still, and his physical power was at a very low ebb.

Abraham managed to procure a litter for his master, — at that hour of the night this was no easy task, — and took him home as quickly and quietly as was possible under the circumstances. Needing more assistance, Abraham stopped on the way and sought it of Baruch, the neighbor of Lazarus, who gave it heartily, accompanying the slave and the bearers to the house of Simon the Leper. Martha was asleep; but Mary's sweet face peered anxiously from the doorway as the litter halted. Baruch hastily advanced, and explained the matter to her.

"No one knoweth the cause of this mishap,"

he said gently ; “ I least of all. But much I fear that Lazarus hath been hardly dealt with. Say thou naught of it. Thy brother is a man of eminence, and the tongues of these times wag easily. Say thou that he is ailing, and keep all men from the doors till he doth recover.”

This caution was of the wisest, but it proved almost impossible to follow the advice. By morning Lazarus lay in his own bed, a very sick man. Rumors of his condition, mingled with wild tales of strange causes for it, had got afloat. Bethany was astir, and Jerusalem gossiped. Talkative neighbors gadded about the hamlet, and messages of curiosity in the name of sympathy besieged the doors of the sick man's house.

To all of these the sisters of Lazarus returned courteous but dignified replies, indicating their desire that neighborly service should remain at a distance until summoned, and expressing the quiet conviction that their brother's health would be quickly reinstated. By the morning of the second day the condition of Lazarus became so serious that Mary, more sensitive and therefore less hopeful than her sister, was overwhelmed with the acutest anxiety. She now gave herself entirely to the sick-room, which she did not suffer herself to leave even for the most necessary food and rest. Martha attended to the

house, and to the messages from the outside world. The leading physicians of Jerusalem came and went. Servants moved about the court with velvet feet and silent tongues. Lazarus was sinking perceptibly.

Upon the evening of the fifth day of his illness, Lazarus turned his face toward the light and feebly opened his eyes. Between him and the casement a woman's face hung like an angel's in a blurred cloud. There was Mary his sister, patient and pale. The intensity of her love and anxiety gave dark power to her eyes, which burned like flames of anguish before him. Lazarus weakly lifted his head, and, observing the other persons present in the room, indicated by a motion of his hand and eyelids that he wished them removed.

His wish was regarded, as the whims of the dangerously sick are, and Mary was left for a few moments alone with him, as he seemed to desire.

As soon as the sick man had assured himself of this fact, he clutched the hand of Mary with a distressing, appealing clasp, and tried to make over to her some burden weighing upon his confused thought. This, she saw, he found so difficult to do that he despaired of it, and his effort and despair intensified his evident suffering. Mary gathered her wits, and thought swiftly.

She knew little of the world and less of love; but even Mary had divined that a woman might be found at the source of all the miseries which had befallen her brother.

“Dear Lazarus,” she murmured, “I understand. Whatever thou wilt I will do — for her — or for thee. Tell me her name.”

Struggling to articulate, Lazarus managed to breathe, “Zahara.”

“Zahara? Thou speakest not of the daughter of Annas?”

“It is she.”

“What wouldst thou, O my brother, that I do for this Zahara?”

“Remember — Zahara. Shelter — Zahara.”

“He wandereth,” thought Mary. “How should I ever shelter Zahara?” But she answered soothingly: “Dear Lazarus, what more? What else desirest thou?” Lazarus put his cold lips to his sister’s ear, and whispered one word, a name.

“Oh,” moaned Mary. “We have sent for Him. We send in vain. Messengers go hither and thither. They run at our command. He travelth. He is in distant places. He cometh not. Thou shalt live when He cometh. Thou shalt not die. He loveth thee.”

The gray countenance of the sick man expressed a distress amounting to agony. He

turned his head feebly to and fro upon his pillow, with a helpless, hopeless motion.

"I did neglect him," he groaned. "He will not come. I die. He cometh not. Tell him" —

"What shall I tell him?" sobbed Mary. Her tears rained on her brother's face. She struggled to command herself, and dashed them away. Lazarus did not answer. Exhausted by excessive effort, he sank into something like a swoon. The color of his face took on a mortal hue. Terrified, Mary stirred to call for help; but his hand held her in a clasp she could not wrench; Lazarus seemed to try to draw her back; his lips moved; she made out that he strove to say: —

"Love — Forgive."

With these, the two most solemn words in the range of human speech, Lazarus lapsed past the power of speaking. He lay as he was, in a stupor, all the night, recognizing no person after this, and giving no further evidence of consciousness. The physicians bustled about, making a great show of the ignorant art of their times. Martha wept noisily; but Mary sat as if she were turning to ice.

At daybreak, without a struggle and without a sign, Lazarus ceased to breathe; the beating of his heart stopped; and Mary dully heard voices saying: —

“He is dead.”

Martha came and tried, with unusual gentleness, to remove Mary's hand. But the fingers of the corpse had grown rigid about it. It was necessary for the physicians to separate the clasp of the living and the dead.

Now the most distressing feature of this dreary and mysterious death was one which the sisters of Lazarus strove, as long as they could, to conceal from public knowledge, and when they could keep it to themselves no longer mourned over it the more bitterly for that. By that last interview, Mary had been put in a position more difficult and more cruel than her strong self-possession gave hint of to the consciousness of the dying man.

It was true that the family of Lazarus had made every effort which influence, opulence, energy, and love could command to communicate with the great Healer, whose skill they fully believed could have averted their terrible bereavement. It was also true that their messengers had reached him.

The piteous fact was that Jesus of Nazareth had refused to come to Bethany.

CHAPTER XXII.

AT all events, from whatever cause, and whether or not the calamity could have been prevented, Lazarus was dead. His sensitive life had gone out like a candle quenched by a breath in the midst of a feast. The torch-bearers stared in each others' faces, and glanced into the darkness behind them with the sick horror that sudden death always produces, and more than any other the death of a young and vigorous man. It is somehow particularly expected of the young and popular that they go on living. The eminence of Lazarus made this death a matter of deep public interest. His social position, his influence, and his wealth added many a mourner to the crowd who poured into Bethany, to pass with the sisters, Martha and Mary, the days of formal sorrow by which it was the custom of their people to bewail the dead.

Martha accepted the public demonstration appreciatively. It suited her, as a testimony to the position of the family. She received her friends with many expressions of her own private bereavement. Martha loved Lazarus, and

she was really afflicted. But Martha liked to listen and to talk ; and bereavement only emphasizes, but does not change, the nature of the bereaved.

Mary did not see the neighbors. Mary could not. She had followed her brother to the family sepulchre, and had stood with bowed and veiled head while the body of Lazarus was entombed. The burial, according to the habit of the country, took place upon the day of the death. Mary was stunned by the terrible swiftness with which everything had happened. It seemed to her that death had literally made a snatch at her, and torn the very heart out of her life. Mary did not weep. She could not. She was rigid with grief. The love of sister for brother, when it excels its kind, is one of the strongest, as it is one of the purest, in the world. The love of Mary for Lazarus was a womanly, unselfish, and now pitiful thing. Mary had no life of her own. She had never known one. Since Lazarus was a little fellow, and they played together in the court, the gentle girl had existed only for and only in her younger brother. Mary was the saddest woman in Judea that day. No, not the saddest. There was one — but who remembered her? Who comforted *her*? In hours like these, what cries go up to Heaven from the last and deepest anguish of unrecognized love !

From the palace of Annas nothing was heard. Jerusalem throbbed with the death of Lazarus; but the palace gave no sign. The casements were closed. Doors were curtained. Servants were dumb. The High priest was invisible. There were rumors that a slave had been punished or tortured in his princely family. These changed into a report that a slave was missing, — whether murdered or fled, who knew? And who cared? In the general excitement and sorrow, the palace was dumb.

For the cruelest of the gossip that buzzed in Bethany the tongue of Malachi was responsible.

“This Jesus, this prater, this boaster and sorcerer, — now we have the nature of the fellow put to the test. What was our eminent neighbor Lazarus? His patron and his friend. How hath the famous Healer dealt with him? Look ye, my neighbors, did he answer the call of mortal need? Did he come to the dying bed of Lazarus? Did he stretch forth that mighty power we hear so much about, and prevent this important death which has left sorrow in all our country? Where was Jesus of Nazareth that Lazarus of Bethany lies dead?”

Alas, where was he? More than Malachi cast this significant question upon the agitated discussions of the week. The state of public feel-

ing and opinion concerning the Nazarene had intensified rapidly, we may say terribly, during the months of that memorable winter. The most bitterly hated and the most tenderly beloved man in Judea and its surrounding principalities had now become the most perplexed and imperiled. Those who loved him most intelligently and courageously, and who shared the risks and excitement of his mission, were, in fact, agreed to prevent him from returning to Jerusalem, if they could. His gentle and merciful career had now passed the stage of philanthropy, and taken on the hard name of political adventure. No longer was he looked upon as a harmless fanatic, an amiable sorcerer, a dabbler in healing, an excellent missionary. Sanhedrim and governor had scrutinized the man. Priest and prince watched him. The dangerous title of revolutionist had become attached to him.

What then? Was Jesus of Nazareth *afraid*? Did he stay away from Bethany, forsooth, lest he should be stoned? Did he allow his chosen friend to die without even the most ordinary services of friendship, because he himself was not ready to run sacred risks? Or, wary as pretenders are, did he remove himself lest the weakness of his claims should be exposed by this conclusive test? For whatever reason, did he not *dare* to show himself among the friends, now the mourners of Lazarus?

“He is a shrewd fellow,” cried Malachi the Pharisee, making the most of his opportunity again to command the ears of his neighbors, and these, alas ! the fickle people easily gave him. “This upstart is no fool. He estimates the intelligence of the citizens of Bethany correctly. He knows that we are not to be duped for our pains. How now ! If this Jesus is what ye have believed him, could he not save his intimate friend from an untimely death ? *Would* he not, if so be he *could* do the deed ? People of Bethany ! people of Jerusalem and the neighborhood ! I appeal to ye ! Was I not correct in the value I put upon this cowardly and deceitful fellow ?”

At this moment there passed by the group a man and a woman, whose faces were turned in the direction of Simon the Leper’s house. These were Ariella and Baruch, happy man and wife, on their way to sorrow with the sufferers in the bereaved home. Their faces wore the subdued and gentle sadness of sympathy ; but the rich personal joy of health, freedom, youth, and wedlock burned through their veil of neighborly feeling like the sun blazing through a mist. It was like looking upon souls in Paradise to look upon those two.

“There,” retorted Amos of Gethsemane, turning upon Malachi with curling lip, — “there you have your answer. Look to it !”

“But how say *you*?” cried another contemptuous voice, “that the Nazarene has allowed his friend to die like any common neglected man?”

“His will I know not,” answered Amos solemnly, “but I know that it is the will of a wise and holy man. More I need not know.”

“Verily, thou art easily satisfied,” laughed some one scornfully.

At this moment Enoch, the lad who was wont to guide blind Baruch, ran up to the gossiping group with exciting news.

It was reported that the Nazarene had been seen that morning approaching Bethany.

Now this was the fourth day since the death of Lazarus. Within the house of Simon the Leper the first spasm of grief had subsided into the first alternative of quiet exhaustion. Martha’s pale and saddened face, subdued by a new gentleness, bent over the direction of the mid-day meal with a conscious effort to estrange her thoughts from her sorrow. It seemed to Martha that if she could once stir up a stupid maid to provide for the mourners decently she should feel better. But Mary sat in the darkened room where her darling had died. Her face, buried in her hands, lay upon the sacred bed whence they had carried him to his tomb. She sat upon the hard floor. Her long, fair hair fell about the crouching figure. The casement was

closed. Light came in through the cracks in thin, radiant lines, on which the motes of dust danced like little spirits. Mary watched them, now and then, dully. She had ceased to weep. She felt a physical coldness at her heart which made her understand what men meant when they said, "My heart is turning to stone." She repeated to herself, "Lazarus is dead."

Suddenly there was a stir in the silent house. Voices started, and hushed. Footsteps fell and ceased. Something had happened below. But what then? Nothing could happen now that mattered any more. Mary did not raise her head to listen. Then Martha entered the room. She hurried, but she trod softly. She came up and put her hand on Mary's hair with the motherly gesture of an elder sister.

"Mary, arise thee. Abraham bringeth us great news. The Master cometh from Jericho, and is already on his way to Bethany. Arise thee, and come with me, that we may meet him."

But Mary burst into terrible sobs, and shook her head. With her hands she motioned her sister away. She and Martha were different. Martha could meet him among all those people on the highway. Mary was not like that. Mary sat still in the house. For the moment, was it possible that a doubt — her first — had

shot through her tender heart? Did she, too, question, "Why cometh He too late?"

Now, when Mary was left alone, the curtains of her room gently parted, and a step like a breath entered. None but one refined by the personal knowledge of suffering could have spoken with the voice which said:—

"Fear me not, Mary. I intrude upon thee not, save for the space of a moment. It is thy neighbor, — Ariella."

Mary stretched out her hand, and grasped that of Ariella strongly. She did not raise her face. An indefinable comfort flowed from the touch of Ariella into her own exhausted nature. How delicate a hand it was, how reserved, how tender!

"I come upon an errand of importance," began Ariella in a steady tone, as if nothing had happened. Ariella did not talk of Lazarus. She proceeded at once, for she did not sit down, nor have about her the air of a person who meant to remain for a call of condolence. "I must consult either Martha or thyself upon a certain matter."

"Martha has gone forth," said Mary evasively, still without looking up.

"She goeth to the grave to weep there," replied Ariella. "The neighbors told me thus as I passed in at the door."

Mary made no reply. She did not care to discuss the true nature of Martha's errand. Ariella, perceiving this reserve, hastened to say : —

“A fugitive hath sought refuge with us, at the house of our mother and Baruch my husband. Last night she came unto us like a hunted animal panting from the hunter, and we received her, and did shelter her, for we knew not what else to do unto the miserable creature. She fleeth from the palace.”

“From the palace! Of Annas?” Mary lifted her head.

“She is a slave of Annas the High priest,” replied Ariella, observing Mary with gentle keenness.

“Oh! — a slave!” Mary's face fell wearily again.

“She telleth a strange story,” continued Ariella in a low tone, “and she hath suffered unto death. Knowest thou, Mary, aught to advise me concerning the poor soul? Shall we shelter her?”

“Shelter her?” said Mary with sudden interest and earnestness. “Yea, shelter her, Ariella! Shelter any woman who fleeth to thee from the palace, in the name of misery and of mercy.”

“Shall I do it in another name?” asked Ariella breathlessly. “Trust me, Mary. It did

befall Baruch to hear strange things the other night when thy calamity began. Baruch said unto me, ‘*Shelter her in the name of the dead.*’ ”

“Do it, then, and God be with thee!” whispered Mary.

The two women clasped hands, and without further words Ariella glided away. Mary’s heavy head fell down upon the bedside. She cared not for this fugitive. What did it matter? What was the life of a slave? Lazarus was dead. But Lazarus might care. Whoever she was, — this Zahara, she and her plotting servants, who had cost the life too precious to be set in the same balance with the inmates of a hundred palaces, — Lazarus had asked it. Lazarus had said, “Remember and shelter.”

Hours passed. Mary sat on in the dark and dreary room. She had the temperament which does not, because it *cannot*, conquer grief by action. All her strength must come through reflection and religious faith. She must think herself, and pray herself, not work herself, into peace. The worker and the dreamer are always at odds, and Martha and Mary could no more understand each other than the Pharisee and Sadducee, or the living and the dead.

Mary was sitting just as her sister and Ari-

ella had found and left her, when Martha unexpectedly returned. She hurried into the room excitedly, and said : —

“The Master called for thee. Hurry, Mary, and do not be moping there any longer. I am ashamed of thee.”

Mary arose slowly. Martha’s voice jarred on her, but she was used to that. She veiled herself, and followed her sister confusedly. She was unconscious of any details on that sad, strange walk into the outer world, her first since she had followed her brother to his grave. She did not lift her eyes from the ground. She saw the gravel, the blades of grass, and little pebbles and glittering sand, and Martha’s robe fluttering before her. She could not tell where she was, nor how far she had gone, when a voice quite near her murmured : —

“*Mary.*”

Oh, this was not the voice of any common mourner, any paltry, petty comforter ! What neighbor, what friend or kin, was there, whose sorrow sank into her soul like sacred dew ? All Mary’s nature lifted itself like a dying flower to his face. When she saw how broken it was she fell at his feet, and passionately, piteously cried : —

“Oh, if *Thou* hadst been here he had not died ! He had not died !”

Cut into the side of the limestone cliff, under the hamlet of Bethany, and with a glance toward the heights of Olivet, well shielded by olive-trees, and close upon the highway, the sepulchre of Lazarus responded drearily to the gaze of the mourners who had thronged to it. The tomb was new, hewn by the family upon private land, and carved with all the mortuary art of the times. It had not been constructed above a year or two. Lazarus himself had wrought it, expending much thought upon it, that it might be a spot of beauty, and of dignity worthy of the family eminence. Its stone lips had gaped now and shut upon him; one might fancy that it was with a certain insensate pride that they received their designer and creator for their first victim.

It was a fair day, sunny and warm. The soul of the coming spring was already in the air. Budding trees and blossoms trembled in the low and pleasant wind. The sky throbbed with the deep color which it wears when the creation of life is at its fullest and richest. It was a day when it seems impossible to die, incredible to be dead.

Before the tomb of Lazarus there had collected a large and serious crowd. The disciples of the Nazarene had made every effort to prevent the knowledge of his return from spreading

widely, but this was a thing impossible. The eminence of the dead, the suddenness and mystery of the death, wild rumors as to some cause for it more interesting to public curiosity than the fact itself, — these had swelled the crowd of formal mourners, who came to gather about the bereaved household. The return of the Nazarene, and his close personal connection with the case, had called from Jerusalem a mixed mass of people, who gathered, from every motive under the sun, about the tomb.

Among these could be easily recognized many persons familiar to our story. Malachi the Pharisee stood pompously in a prominent position, with his thick underlip pursed up in the intensest satisfaction. Malachi was not a murderous man, but he took solid satisfaction in the death of Lazarus. What could so benevolently have interfered to verify his own position in regard to the Nazarene? He surveyed the crowd with the secret elation of a man who says, I told you so. Hagar his wife stood at some distance from him, ceremoniously veiled, more so than was needed. She acted as if she were a little ashamed of her husband. Her loud tongue was still. Her roving eyes were lowered. Who was that sweet-lipped, devout young man yonder? The favorite disciple of Jesus; he who, it was said, kept so closely to

his Master, as if not knowing whether he most loved or most feared for him, whether he were there to caress or protect him. John was absorbed in Jesus as the fuel is in the fire. Peter the fisherman whispered something to him restlessly; but John had the manner of one who heard no man.

Rachel, the neighbor of Lazarus, was among the people, and beside her leaned Ariella and Baruch, hand clasped in hand.

Amos of Gethsemane stood behind these three, saying nothing, as was the habit of Amos. Some of the workmen of Lazarus were in the group, and with them the young man who made mourning for Lazarus and thought of Mary. The old Sheliach from Jerusalem could be noticed observing the scene, without commenting upon it. Standing apart by himself, the slave Abraham wept bitterly. Mary and Martha were not yet come to the tomb, and it was said by the disciples of the Nazarene that he lingered with the sisters of the dead to comfort them.

"Comfort is a useful thing before *that!*" sneered Malachi, pointing to the closed sepulchre.

Malachi had scarcely spoken these words, when a murmur ran along the crowd that the Nazarene and the sisters of the dead were to be seen approaching the tomb. The people fell back with

a motion of involuntary respect. The lightest lip ceased its gossip, and the shallowest heart felt something like a throb of reverence.

"He boweth his head," whispered Rachel. "He hath the aspect of a mourner closely of kin."

"Kin is of the heart," murmured Ariella to her husband.

"Would that I could see his countenance," said a bystander, "but the motion of the man hideth it."

At this moment, a stir among the people indicated a diversion of interest to another quarter. Enoch the lad, prowling about, as is the manner of boys, had peered above the sepulchre, treading down the bushes that grew there, and searching after, who knows what, whether the body or the soul of the dead. He had made a discovery which caused him to run back, as fast as his legs could carry him, to his former master, Baruch, with the announcement that he had seen a ghost. "It was not Lazarus," he said, "for she was a woman ; but you could see for yourself that it was not like other people."

Baruch and Ariella, hushing the boy, with all speed made their way, trying to attract as little attention as they could, to the thicket whence the lad had emerged. There, prostrate on the ground, with her rich clothing torn by thorns,

her hair disheveled, and her face hidden on her arms, lay a woman who seemed to be half dead with grief. Her teeth bit into her delicate flesh; her beautiful form shook with deep, dry sobs; she had thrust one hand through the bushes till it reached the top of the sepulchre, and lay there clenched. Once she was seen to pat the cold stone with a passionate tenderness enough to break one's heart to see.

“Oh! a *woman!*” murmured Ariella. “Let me go first, dear Baruch.”

At the sound of voices the prostrate woman gathered herself like a lioness, and bounded by one great lithe spring to her feet. Her veil had fallen, and the light of day fell full upon her wan and beautiful face. It was Zahara, daughter and princess of the house of Annas the High priest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BEFORE the tomb of Lazarus the people fell back. They made way for the Nazarene, who advanced silently. His head was still bowed. He walked like a man oppressed with grief. The sobbing women followed him. A few paces before the door of the tomb, they stopped. A breathless hush fell upon the crowd ; that within the sepulchre was scarcely deeper. In the silence, a bird upon an olive-branch above the tomb began to sing shrilly ; it sang on for some moments uninterrupted, so intense was the quiet ; it was a merry little gay bird, with bright plumage, and sang as if it had been summoned to a festival. Abraham the slave, being a dull, affectionate fellow, was sorely displeased with this untimely mirth, and lifted his hand to stone the bird ; but a slight movement in the bushes above the tomb deterred him.

A woman, a stranger, was descending the rocky steep to join the mourners. She was accompanied by Baruch and Ariella, who had drawn back a little behind her ; Ariella seemed to be guarding her and protecting her with

tender hands, lest the lady's steps should miss their hold upon the rough way. The three added themselves to the group below, and stood silently.

Zahara's position was now one of startling prominence, but she seemed unconscious of it. Her dress, hastily rearranged, was folded closely about her womanly figure; her veil was torn, and fell loosely over hair and shoulders, revealing her beautiful and haggard face. Despair had settled on it. Her lips were drawn in; her dark eyes stared straight before her; they were dry and bright; her hands were clenched across her breast; her body swayed from exhaustion which her soul scornfully repudiated; she seemed to have planted herself where she was, like a growing thing that was trying to take root; she rejected the help of Ariella, and stood quite alone. Her eyes were fixed upon one object. There might have been a couple of hundred people about and before the tomb. She saw but one. For the first time in her life, Zahara beheld the Nazarene.

Jesus was now standing within a dozen paces of the tomb. His head was yet bowed. As Zahara turned her eyes upon him, it dropped into his hands. His body trembled, shook; a convulsion of grief swept over that sensitive form; suddenly a sob, powerfully repressed,

broke upon the air. Incredulous, bewildered, melted at heart, Zahara perceived that the man was weeping.

The expression of her face changed as iron changes to fire. She advanced a step or two, moving like a woman in a dream; her eyes opened; her clenched fingers unclosed; she regarded Jesus piercingly, then gently; something like a dumb outcry seemed to dart over the woman, and to appeal from her to him. The daughter of the High priest, aristocrat, skeptic, Sadducee, had never been educated to believe in the existence of life beyond the apparent end of death. To her despairing view Lazarus was buried, and there was the end of it. Lazarus was in that limestone rock. There was no more Lazarus. She had not a hope nor a faith beyond the rolling of that ghastly stone upon the mouth of the sepulchre. Her imagination was destitute of images which could offer her so much as the apparition of comfort in an hour like this. She looked upon the friend of her lover. He could weep, then; he suffered; he loved. Betrayed by his own pretensions, helpless in the presence of actual death, mortified, defeated, humiliated, he stood shaken. Zahara could have pitied the plebeian, the charlatan, the ignorant Rabbi, this man of the people, this carpenter, this baffled agitator — could have

pitied? Nay, she *could* not. A power incomprehensible to Zahara withstood her. She had met with Faith in Immortality; she had come face to face with Him who represented Immortality, who held out Eternal Life as if it were a gift in his hand to the hopes and despairs of men. Now, as she stood where she was, pitiously staring upon him, Jesus raised his head, and lifted up his eyes and looked upon Zahara.

She saw a man of lofty stature, drawn to its full height. He had a commanding air. His garments were the garments of the people, but his mien was the mien of a king. His sandals were dusty and travel-worn. He had the hand of an artisan. His head was royal, and raised itself upon strong shoulders. He had beautiful hair, of the finest texture, curling and fair; his unshaven beard fell to his breast; the expression of his concealed lips was delicate as no word may tell it; his mouth quivered as Zahara turned her pale face hither, and a little higher, toward him, with the uncontrollable impulse of dawning respect. It seemed as if he were touched by the sight of the poor girl's misery. As the two stood confronting each other, they were to the eye like human love confronting the Divine, human anguish appealing to Divine pity, the helplessness of earth questioning the power of heaven.

Zahara raised her eyes, and looked into the Nazarene's. What a gaze fell upon her! She felt scorched. That supreme look burned into her soul like holy fire. Those eyes, — what color had they? What form? No man knew, or knoweth unto this day. Years afterward, Zahara used to say that they were to her vision as the sun in mid-heaven, and of them she could tell no more. She shriveled under them and sank before them. The majesty and beauty of that face, past power of speech to say it or form of dream to dream it, blazed above her for a moment. Then Zahara slowly drooped through all her haughty body, and sank upon her knees.

"Lord," she murmured, "Lord! He loved thee, and I restrained him. Blame him not there in the tomb, — he is dead. Dead men cannot tell the truth. Jesus of Nazareth! it was all my fault. We loved each other, and I knew thee not."

But Jesus made no answer to Zahara. He had suddenly retreated a step or two, and fixed his eyes upon the tomb. Then, lifting them to the hot, bright sky, he stretched his hands out in the attitude of supplication, and so stood, rapt and mute, among the people, and no one stirred or spoke in all the throng. Solemnly, in an undertone, and overheard only by those who stood nearest him, he slowly and distinctly said: —

“Behold, I am the Resurrection. I am the Life. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, he shall live.”

“Lord!” wailed a woman’s voice, “he did believe on thee!” It was Zahara weeping at his feet, — weeping now, like any woman, the ice of anguish thawed. Now in the first thrill of her tears she was aware that an incredible, nay, a ghastly thing had happened. The Nazarene had ordered the stone which guarded the sepulchre to be removed. Protests from the family, whispers from the crowd, a moment of intense and terrible excitement, swept giddily over Zahara’s senses. Speak she could not. John the Disciple sprang with the alacrity of love and trust to obey his Master’s command. Amos of Gethsemane and Baruch of Bethany followed. The three men executed the command in silence, and fell back.

But Jesus, rapt in prayer, stood with eyes lifted to heaven, and so standing seemed to have grown unaware of any who pressed about him. Mary came near timidly, and, sinking by the side of Zahara, drew the hem of his dusty garment to her lips and kissed it. An inexplicable awe had fallen upon the hearts of the throng. The silence became profound. The bird upon the tomb had ceased singing.

Suddenly a loud and ringing voice struck the still air: —

“Lazarus! *Lazarus!*”

Who addressed the dead man, as one addresseth a friend who is expected to reply? The people stared at each other and shuddered.

“Lazarus! *Λάζαρε, δεῦρο ἔξω. Come forth!*”

The cry was commanding and awful. It penetrated the souls of the living as lightning penetrates the earth. If any voice could have reached the spirit of the dead —

Great God of our people! Look yonder! What has befallen us? What thing is this? Whom have we in our midst? What is this blinding sight?

The stone lips of the sepulchre mutter; the black throat yawns; there is motion within, and sound. Steps stir — there is a flickering of light and a shifting of shadow — a shape moves, and rises before our eyes. Is it the living? Was it the dead?

Clad in his shroud, as the tomb had taken him, Lazarus, for four days a dead man, stoops from the sepulchre, stands uprightly, and, walking steadily into the bright air, moves down the scattering ranks of his mourners, and solemnly regards them.

Of love and joy wrenched from death and despair what is there to say? The words that remain are few. They can only tell us how

Zahara fled forever from the palace of the High priest, and, loyally sheltered by Ariella, went in due time to the home of Lazarus, and was wedded unto him by the sacred lips of the Great Rabbi, thus protecting herself from the authority of her father, and becoming the subject of her husband according to the Jewish law; how with her own impetuosity and intensity she flung off her old life, and came forth from her old faith, even as the dead had come forth from the tomb, and joined herself to the faith of her husband with a cordial soul; how these two, with the sisters of Lazarus and Rebecca the slave, journeyed together, escaping the dangerous prominence of their startling history, into what they called another country.

For strangers will welcome when neighbors mock, and in the province where they made their new home these elected ones taught the faith of Him who had given his own life for truth's sake and for God's, — the faith of humanity and purity, of mercy and peace, the faith that respects the poor, and comforts the unhappy, and is gentle with the sick, and restores the mistaken and the willful and the wrong, and gives life unto the dead.

But it is doubtful if Zahara herself ever fully understood her own connection or that of her husband with the tragedy which one month

from the burial of Lazarus of Bethany shook the world.

Upon the secret influence and spoken word of Annas the High priest the fate of the Nazarene hung balanced for so much of a space as might have saved — and did condemn — the grandest and the most piteous of lives.

How could Lazarus tell Zahara this? She became so accustomed to the thought which her husband did not share with her that perhaps she wondered less, or worried less, about the facts which she reserved, than might otherwise have been the case. There must be subjects upon which the lips of Lazarus were sealed, — those of the grave no closer. Time did not loosen them. He became a tender husband, a busy citizen, a devout man; but he remained a silent one.

The friendship experienced by Jesus for Lazarus, maintained to the end with a self-obliteration and tenderness upon which it is heart-breaking to think, went with other recorded and unrecorded sacrifices to count the cost of a price upon which we dare not dwell, and from whose preciousness we avert an awed and humbled face.

Whence had Lazarus come? Where had he been? What solemn marvels had he seen? What awful secrets did he know? What

blessed story could he tell? Passionately beloved to the end, and assiduously cherished, his own wife never knew. She might as well — she would as soon — have asked the sepulchre from which he had emerged.

THE END.

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